THE Hudson REVIEW

E. M. CIORAN:
The Snares of Wisdom

ROBERT HAZEL:
White Anglo-Saxon Protestant—a story

A. ALVAREZ:
The Delinquent Aesthetic

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS:
Invaded Selves

CHARLES W. MILLARD:
The Great Grey Whitney

Poems by VINCENT STEWART, LELAND HICKMAN, MAY SWENSON, JACK MARSHALL, PHILIP LEVINE.

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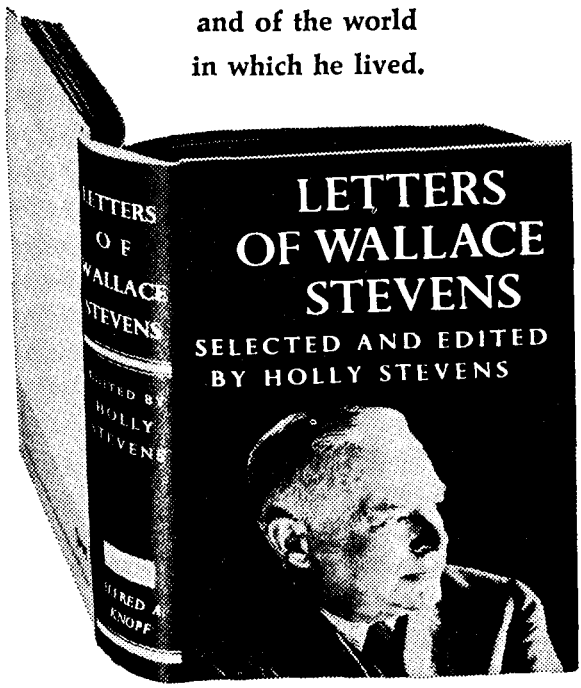

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THE Hudson Review

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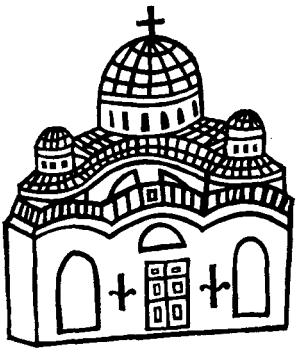

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E. M. CIORAN

The Snares of Wisdom

ONCE WE REALIZE TO WHAT DEPTH appearances are credited by the normal consciousness, it becomes impossible to endorse the Vedantic thesis according to which "non-distinction is the soul's natural state." What is meant here by natural state is the state of being awake, which, as it happens, is anything but natural. The living man apprehends existence everywhere; directly he wakes up, directly he has ceased being *nature,* he starts detecting falsity in the apparent, appearance in the real, and ultimately entertains doubts about the notion of reality itself. Gone are all distinctions, and with them go tension and drama. When viewed from too great a height, the kingdom of diversity and of the many vanishes. On a certain level of knowledge, only non-being can hold up.

We live only out of ignorance. As soon as we gain awareness we feel at odds with everything, but while we are benighted, appearances thrive, and clinging to them is a scent of the inviolable that moves us to love or to hate them, to come to grips with them. How could we level off against phantasms? Yet that is what they become once we are disabused of their claim to rank as essences. Knowing, or being awake rather, opens between them and us a rift that, unfortunately, represents no conflict; if only it did, we would have no complaint. But no, it is, rather, the silencing of all conflicts, the dire abolition of the tragic. . . .

Contrary to the affirmation of Vedanta, the soul is by nature inclined to multiplicity and to differentiation. It flourishes only in the midst of semblances; if it unmasked them, it would cut itself from the stalk and wither. In waking up, it forfeits its power to release, let alone sustain, any creative impulse whatever. Deliverance being at the farthest remove from inspiration, to seek it would, in the case of a writer, be tantamount to a resignation, more than that, to suicide. If he hopes to produce, he must follow his bent, for good and for evil alike, especially for evil. By liberating himself from it, he becomes estranged from himself:

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his reverses are strokes of luck. He could find no surer way of wrecking his gifts than placing himself above success and adversity, pleasure and pain, life and death. Through his desire to be done with them, he may, one fine day, discover that he is beside himself and the world, with just enough vigor left to conceive some project, but at his wit's end when it comes to executing it. This phenomenon has a bearing on the world at large: whoever means to make his mark must completely divorce living from dying, must set all such couples of contraries at swordpoint, wantonly multiply their irreducible differences, wallow in antinomy; he must, in short, remain on the surface of things. To produce, to "create," means denying oneself clearsightedness, having the courage or good fortune not to perceive the lie inherent in diversity, the deceptive nature of the multiple. A work can be created only if we blind ourselves on appearances; as soon as we stop attributing to them a metaphysical dimension, we are bereft of all our resources.

Nothing stimulates us more than inflating trifles, setting up spurious antitheses, spying conflicts where none exist. To refrain from doing this would bring about universal sterility. Only illusion is fertile; it alone can *originate*. Through its agency we are able to give birth, to engender (in every sense of the word), to merge ourselves with the dream of diversity. The gap between us and the absolute may be and is, in fact, unreal; nevertheless, this unreality, which enthusiasts of action do not view as unreal, is our very existence. The faster we hold to appearances, the more productive we are: to create a work means embracing all these incompatibilities, these trumped-up antagonisms in which lively minds revel. The writer should know, better than anyone, what he owes to these mirages, these sleights-of-mind, and beware of losing his curiosity about them; if he neglects them, or denounces them, he will have cut the ground from under his own feet, discarded his materials, and find himself practicing in a void. Should he then turn to the absolute, what he will find there, at best, is gratification in stupor.

Only a god hungering for imperfection within and outside himself, only a harrowed god could have imagined and brought forth the creation; only a man made in his image can aspire to an enterprise of the same order. If wisdom figures foremost

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among the causes of sterility, that is because it does its utmost to reconcile us with the world and with ourselves. No greater misfortune could befall our ambitions and our talents; it *wisens them,* which amounts to saying that it kills them, it afflicts our innermost self, our secrets, persecuting what sinister qualities we are lucky enough to have; it undermines us, submerges us, it compromises all our defects.

Have we done violence to our desires, molested and stifled our attachments and our passions? If so, we shall curse those who gave us the necessary encouragement, above all the sage in us, our most redoubtable enemy, who is to blame for curing us of everything, except nostalgia for the maladies he cured. There is no limit to the turmoil of someone who yearns for his bygone enthusiasms and, inconsolable for having conquered them, feels himself succumbing to the poison of quietude. Once we have perceived the nullity of all desire, it takes superhuman powers of obfuscation, it takes *saintliness,* to experience desire anew and yield to it unreservedly. The detractor of wisdom who also happened to be a believer would repeat endlessly: "Lord, help me fall from grace, help me wallow in error and crime, give me words that will scorch you and consume me, that will reduce *both of us* to ashes." Someone who has never felt a craving, almost beyond endurance, for purity, cannot know what it is to crave the abyss. When one has dwelled too much on paradise and made a haunt of the hereafter, they begin to pall. Disrelish for the next world leads to an amorous obsession with hell. Without this obsession, religions—in their equivocal aspect—would be incomprehensible. Aversion to the elect, attraction to the outcast: such is the dual movement of all who dream of their former follies and would commit any sin just to stop treading "the path toward perfection." They note, with despair, the progress they have made in becoming detached, whereas, by temperament, they were not suited for that calling. In *Milinda's Questions,* King Menander asks the ascetic, Nâgasena, what distinguishes the passionate man from the dispassionate man: "My lord! The passionate man, when he eats, tastes the flavor and the passion of flavoring; the dispassionate man tastes the flavor but not the passion of flavoring." The whole secret of life and of art, everything *here below,* resides in the "passion of flavoring."

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When we no longer experience it, we are left, in our destitution, with one last resource: an exterminating smile.

Becoming progressively detached means foregoing all our motives for acting, it means losing the dividends of our defects and our vices, with the result that we sink into that state of mind known as *down in the dumps*—a void following the disappearance of our appetites, anxiety which has degenerated into indifference, submersion in neutrality. If in being wise we place ourselves above life and death, in being down in the dumps (understood as *stunted* wisdom) we fall beneath. It is there, underneath, that appearances are leveled, that diversity is invalidated, with frightening consequences, especially for the writer who, in a world where everything is on a par, has no reason to lean toward one aspect of it rather than some other; thus it is impossible for him to choose a *subject*—which can he prefer if objects themselves are interchangeable and undistinctive? Even *being* is banished from this absolute desert, as something rather too picturesque. We are in the very heart of the undifferentiated, of the glum and flawless One where, in place of illusion, we see, spread before us, a *prostrate* illumination disclosing everything, but this disclosure runs so radically against our grain that we yearn to forget it. In a state of awareness, no man can move forward, least of all the man down in the dumps; he lives in the midst of a *ponderous* unreality—the non-existence of things weighs upon him. To fulfill himself, merely to breathe, he must cast off the fetters of his *own* knowledge, which leads him to conceive of *non-knowing* as salvation. That he can attain only by hurling defiance against the spirit of impartiality and objectivity. A judgment which is "subjective," partial, unfounded serves as a source of dynamism: on the level of acts, only the false is fleshed with reality, but when we are condemned to have an *exact* view of ourselves and of the world, what then can we adhere to, what can we still uphold?

There used to be a madman lurking in us; the sage routed him. When he disappeared, so did our most precious possession, that which made us accept appearances without ruining them as we now do by our practice of discriminating, at every turn, between the real and the illusory. So long as he was around, we had nothing to fear, nor did appearances, which continuously

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wrought the miracle of changing into things before our very eyes. Once he disappeared, they relapsed into bankruptcy. He added spice to existence, he was existence. Now there is nothing to engage our interest, and we have no vantage point. True delirium is the absence of madness.

To fulfill ourselves, we must religiously intoxicate ourselves on the multiple. Where the One is concerned, nothing counts, except the One itself. Let us be done with it, then, if we intend to break the spell of indifference, if we wish to see an end to monotony within and outside ourselves. Whatever shimmers on the surface of the world, and goes by the name *interesting* is the fruit of intoxication and ignorance. As soon as we sober up, we make out nothing around us but barrenness and tedium.

Diversity, born of blindness, falls apart on contact with the sensation of being down in the dumps, which is *blighted* knowledge, a perverse fondness for identity and dread of the new. When this dread takes hold of us, making every change, whatever its nature, seem rooted in mystery and farce, making every event seem at once unfathomable and trifling, we have our eyes fixed not on God, but on the deity, on the immutable essence which does not deign to create, nor even to exist, prefiguring, by its vacuity, that moment, indefinite and unsubstantial, which symbolizes our stalemate. If, as antiquity has it, Fate likes to bring low whatever rises, the dumps would be the price man pays for his elevation. But the dumps undoubtedly beset (if less severely than man) every living creature that somehow or other deserts its origins. Life itself, when it slows its pace and the frenzy sustaining and animating it abates, falls prey to it. What is life, in the final analysis, if not a *phenomenon of rage?* A blessed rage, to which it is essential we surrender ourselves. Directly it seizes us, our unappeased drives come alive: the more they were contained, the more they give vent to themselves. The spectacle we then present does, in spite of its distressing side, prove that we are restored to our true condition, to our nature, despicable and odious though it be. We are better off effortlessly abject than "noble" by imitation or persuasion. An innate vice being preferable to an acquired virtue, we cannot help but feel ill at ease with people who do not accept themselves, with the monk, the prophet, the philanthropist, with those who bend backwards—

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the miser to spend, the ambitious man to be resigned, the arrogant man to be deferential—with all who mind their manners, including the sage, who keeps himself in check, who is never *himself*. Acquired virtue is a foreign body: we like it neither in others nor in ourselves. It is a triumph over self that nags us, a feat that weighs us down and makes us suffer even when we take pride in it. Let us be content with what we are: anyone who longs to better himself must really revel in torture and misery.

If a book is uplifting or, for that matter, cynical, it is certain to stress the havoc wrought by anger—that performance, that crowning glory of rage. When blood rushes to the brain, and we begin to tremble, the effect of days and days of meditation is annulled. There is nothing sillier and more degrading than such a fit, which is inevitably out of all proportion to whatever prompted it; still, the pretext for it being forgotten once it has subsided, a stifled fury keeps rankling us until we draw our dying breath. It's the same with humiliations which we have borne "with dignity." If, in answer to an affront, we first think about our reprisal, wavering between a slap and murder, that wavering will not only make us lose precious time but, in so doing, seal our cowardice. Such vacillation has grave consequences; it is a lapse we cannot forgive ourselves, whereas an outburst, even if its consequences are grotesque, would have consoled us. Painful as well as necessary, anger prevents us from falling prey to obsessions and spares us serious complications: it is a fit of madness that reprieves us from madness. So long as we can count on it, on its regular appearance, we are assured of our equilibrium, as well as our shame. That it stands in the way of spiritual progress no one will deny; but as for the writer (since it is precisely his predicament we are considering here), it is not only not good, it is dangerous for him to govern his petulance. He should do his utmost to nurture it, or the penalty will be literary death.

When angry we feel alive; since it is, unfortunately, only a passing mood, we must be content with its by-products, ranging from backbiting to contumely, any one of which offers us greater scope than disdain—so frail, so abstract, lacking the warmth and breath of life, and unlikely to give us the least satisfaction. Once we have turned away from it, we discover, to our delight,

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what keen pleasure besmirching others can bring. At last we are on equal terms with them, we are struggling, we are no longer *alone*. Formerly, we would study them for the intellectual titillation of finding their weak point; now we do it to strike home. Perhaps we should mind our own business: it is abasing, ignoble, to pass judgment on others. That, however, is what everyone does; by refraining, we ostracize ourselves. Man, splenetic animal that he is, never offers a commentary on his fellow men without disparaging them. Not that he is unable to speak well of them; but speaking ill of them gives him a far bolder sensation of pleasure and of strength. If he humbles and executes them, however, it is not so much to do them harm as to save the remnants of his anger, the remnants of his vitality, to escape the debilitating effects of long practice in disdain.

The slanderer is not the only one to benefit from slander; it is at least as beneficial, if not more so, to the slandered, provided he feels cut to the quick. If he does, his ideas as well as his muscles will be invigorated in a way he never thought possible; it will incite him to hate. Now hatred is not a feeling but a force, an ingredient of diversity which allows beings to thrive at the expense of being. Whoever holds to his status as an *individual* must strive to put himself in situations where he will be forced to hate; the best of these being slander, he may call himself a *victim* of it, but in so doing, he uses an improper expression, or else fails to recognize the advantages it holds in store. The abuse we receive, in words as in deeds, has some virtue only if it wounds us, if it smarts, and awakens us. Are we so unfortunate as to feel nothing? Then we shall fall into a state of calamitous invulnerability and forfeit the favors men, and even fate, do us when they deal their blows (whoever rises above slander will find it easy enough to rise above death). If we were deaf to the opinions noised about us, what reason would we have to slave at a task that craves the approbation of others? Is it even conceivable that a work could have some perfectly autonomous creator? By inuring ourselves, we blot out nearly all the sensations that come of living in common with others. The more immersed we are in solitude, the more we long to lay aside our pens. Of what and of whom can we talk if others no longer exist, if no one deserves to be dignified as an enemy? To have stopped reacting to opinion

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is an alarming symptom, a fatal superiority, acquired at the cost of our reflexes, which puts us in the position of some maimed divinity delighted that he need not stir because he finds nothing worth the effort. At the other extreme, we feel alive in doting on things obviously doomed to pass away, in making a cult of insignificance, and perpetually fussing inside a sphere of inanity, in flying off the handle for no reason.

People who yield to their passions or to their whims, people who are forever emoting, stand out of harm's way (only Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians, who are afflicted with a sense of decorum, set store by psychoanalysis; it holds no attraction for Latin peoples). To be normal, to preserve our health, we should model ourselves not upon the sage, but upon the child, and kick and scream whenever the urge comes upon us. What could be sorrier than wanting to and not daring? For having unlearned to cry, we are at a complete loss—needlessly stuck to our eyes. In antiquity people used to cry, and later on as well, in the Middle Ages and in the seventeenth century (the king, according to Saint-Simon, was quite good at it). Since then, apart from the Romantic interludes this, one of the most effective remedies man possesses, has fallen into discredit. Is it a momentary eclipse, or are we dealing with a new conception of honor? What does seem certain is that one whole portion of the infirmities that plague us, all our diffuse, insidious, nagging ills, may be laid to the injunction which restrains us from making a scene of our rages and afflictions, and of giving way to our most primordial instincts.

We should have the right to howl for fifteen minutes a day, at least; in fact, howl-houses ought to be created for this purpose. "Don't words," someone will rejoin, "give us sufficient relief? Why revert to such outmoded practices?" Conventional by definition, and deaf to our crying needs, words are empty, stale, out of touch with our innermost self: not one emanates from it or goes that deep. If, at the beginning, when they first made their appearance, they might have been of some help, now even those which have been turned into curses are devoid of tonic properties. They have outlived themselves: theirs is a slow and pitiful decay. The principle of anemia which they harbor continues, nonetheless, to work upon us with poisonous effect, whereas the

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howl, which is blood speaking out, uplifts us, fortifies us, and sometimes cures us. When we have the good fortune to release a howl, we straightway feel close to our remote ancestors who must have roared incessantly in their caves, all of them, including those who doodled on the walls. Now, as far removed as we can be from those happy days, we are reduced to living in a society so wretchedly organized that the one place where a man can howl with impunity is the insane asylum. Thus we are forbidden our only means of dispelling the odium of others, and the odium of ourselves. If at least we have books of consolation! There are very few, for the simple reason that there is no consolation and cannot be any so long as we wear the fetters of lucidity and decency. The man who holds himself in, who never lets himself go in an encounter, the "distinguished" man in short, is a potential lunatic. The same applies to anyone who "suffers in silence." If we insist upon a minimum of equilibrium, let us start screaming again, let us do it with a passion, at every opportunity, proclaiming our minds at stake. Moreover, rage, which brews in the gut of life, will come to our aid; don't be surprised that it plays a conspicuous role during periods in which health is tantamount to convulsion and chaos, during periods of religious innovation. Religion and wisdom are totally incompatible: religion is militant, aggressive, unscrupulous. It plunges ahead, leveling all obstacles. The admirable thing about it is that it deigns to sanction our lowliest sentiments, without which it would not have the strong grip upon us that it does. So far as it is concerned, one can really go the limit, in any direction. Impure for being leagued with our vital forces, it invites us to indulge ourselves in every way, and mitigates neither our bliss nor our downfall into God.

Wisdom, because it can offer none of these advantages, has a deadly effect on anyone who wants to assert himself, to exploit his gifts. It is a process of continual self-plunder, requiring that we jettison our irreplaceable stock of good and evil; it has no outlet, it is an impasse exalted into a discipline. What can it pit against ecstasy, which whitewashes the evils of religion? Wisdom: a system of capitulations: namely, reserve, abstention, withdrawal not only from the world but from all worlds, a mineral-like serenity, a craving for petrifaction, out of fear both of pleasure

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and of pain. Compared to an Epictetus, any saint, christian or otherwise, seems a raving *fanatic.* Saints have febrile, histrionic temperaments that seduce you and carry you along; they flatter your weaknesses by denouncing them so violently. Moreover, one has the impression that it would not be hard to *get along* with them: a bit of extravagance or skill would suffice. Sages, on the other hand, will stand for neither compromise nor adventure: they consider rage odious, they reject it in all its forms, they see it as a source of vagrancy. Rather more a source of energy, thinks the man down in the dumps, who embraces it, knowing that it is positive, dynamic, though he may become its victim.

One does not kill oneself out of inertia, but in a fit of anger with oneself (Ajax remains, to this day, the exemplary suicide), in a frenzy of feeling that could be defined as follows: "I can no longer stand being disappointed by myself." This last ditch uprising in the depths of self-disappointment, even if it rarely seems impending, keeps haunting us, though we may have *decided,* once and for all, not to do away with ourselves. If, for many years, a "voice" assured us that we would not make an attempt upon our own lives, that voice, as we grow old, becomes less and less audible. So it is that the further we advance, the more we are at the mercy of some *explosive* silence.

He who kills himself proves that he could just as well have murdered, and even felt the impulse to do so, but turned it against himself. And if he has a furtive, *underground* look about him, that is because he is following the meanderings of self-hatred, and meditating, with perfidious cruelty, the blow to which he will succumb, though not before he has reconsidered his birth, damning it out of hand. It is our birth we must call to account if we wish to cut out the blight at its source. It stands to reason we should revile it, but that is difficult and not commonly done. We rise up against death, against what must come to pass; birth, an event even more irreparable, we leave aside, we pay it little heed. It seems to each of us as remote as the first instant of time. Only he who dreams of abolishing himself revisits it; it is as if he cannot manage to *forget* the unmentionable mechanism of procreation and strives, through appalled hindsight, to destroy the seed from which he sprang.

Inventive and enterprising, the rage of self-destruction is not

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content to shake individuals from their torpor; it takes hold of nations as well, and allows them to renew themselves by making them commit acts in flagrant violation of their pasts; a given nation that seemed to be growing sclerotic was actually heading toward catastrophe, and found guidance in the very mission it had assigned itself. By doubting the necessity of disaster, we resign ourselves to consternation, we make it impossible for ourselves to understand the vogue that fatality enjoys at certain times. The key to all that is inexplicable in history may well lie in self-directed fury, in the dread of satiety and of repetition, in the fact that man will always prefer the bizarre to the humdrum. This phenomenon equally pertains to whole species. Can we seriously contend that so many of them disappeared because of a mere climatic quirk? Isn't it more likely that after millions and millions of years, the great mammals were fed up with traipsing over the surface of the earth, their weariness having reached the exploding point when instinct, like consciousness, starts warring with itself? Everything alive affirms and denies itself in frenzy. Allowing oneself to die is a sign of weakness, obliterating oneself a sign of strength. What we should be afraid of is slumping into a state where we cannot even imagine the desire to destroy ourselves.

It is paradoxical and perhaps dishonest to arraign Indifference, after pressing it, over the years, to grant us the calm and incuriosity of a corpse. Why draw back now when, at last, it is beginning to oblige us and still enjoys, in our eyes, as much prestige as ever? Is it not a betrayal, assaulting the idol we once venerated above all others?

There is no doubt but that we derive some sort of pleasure from about-faces: they quicken our spirit—*recantation keeps us young*. Since our strength can be measured by the sum of beliefs we abjure, each of us should wind up his career a deserter of all possible causes. This is precisely why Indifference, for all the fanaticism it once aroused, frightens us in the end, and seems intolerable: by halting our run of desertions, it sabotages the very principle of our being, it arrests our growth. Could it be that its essence is a negation which we did not know enough to distrust, until it was too late? In adopting it wholeheartedly, we

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could not help but suffer the throes of extreme incuriosity, which alter their victims beyond recognition. Whoever has had the merest intimation of them will no longer aspire to resemble the dead, to have their absent gaze, eyes fixed on something else, on anything, anything but appearances. He will want to return to the world of the living, and, in their company, resume his former woes, which he trampled underfoot in dashing toward detachment.

The person who is not a sage goes astray following in the footsteps of one. Sooner or later he will grow weary of it and leave him, or break with him, if only out of love of breaking; he will declare war on him, as he does on everything, above all on the ideal he failed to attain. When someone has for years invoked Pyrrho and Lao-tse, can he justifiably betray them when he is imbued, more than ever, with their teachings? But is he seriously betraying them, and can he presume to consider himself their victim when his only reproach is that they are in the right? He is in an acutely awkward position, the man who, having entreated wisdom to free him from himself and from the world, comes to detest it, to see in it just another shackle.

[*Translated by Frederick Brown*]

Notes on Contributors

The Evil Demiurge, by E. M. CIORAN, will appear in an early issue of this Review.

ROBERT HAZEL* is the author of two novels, *The Lost Year* and *A Field Full of People.* A book of his poems, *Who Touches This,* is to be published in 1967.

MAY SWENSON's new book of poems, *Half Sun Half Sleep,* is to be published by Scribner's this winter.

A. ALVAREZ, author of *Stewards of Excellence* and *The School of Donne,* works as a free-lance writer in London.

VINCENT STEWART,* a Texan by birth, is in the Department of English at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

LELAND HICKMAN* was born in Santa Barbara, and attended the University of California, Santa Barbara and Berkeley. He is currently living in New York City.

CHARLES W. MILLARD has recently been appointed Director of the Washington Gallery of Modern Art.

LUCY R. LIPPARD* is a free-lance art critic and New York Editor of *Art International.*

The poet and critic CHARLES HIGHAM, who lives in Sydney, is at work on a book on film directors.

HERBERT LEIBOWITZ* teaches English at Columbia; his book on Hart Crane will be published by Columbia University Press later this year.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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ROBERT HAZEL

White Anglo-Saxon Protestant

HERE COMES HAMPDEN NOW, on his way to kill me. He staggers past Minetta's Tavern, the long red-and-white banner of the Gaslight Cafe, the green oval sign of the Kettle of Fish. Now Rienzi's Coffee House with its disarrayed chessboards and miscegenous couples drooped in the scummed windows, and the Funky Antique Shop. And now the Folklore Center where a crowd of students have collected, filling the steps and eddying out to the old granite curb of MacDougal Street: young partisans of Joan Baez and mourners of Medgar Evers, with their guitars, wearing jeans, boots and checkered flannel shirts: Negro boys and girls with a certain gravity, and self-conscious Jewish kids hugging banjos—all ready to go down to Cambridge, Maryland to protest segregation on the Eastern Shore. They appear sixty percent excited and scared, thirty-nine percent honest, and one percent crazy out of their young heads, all reminding me of myself as an undergraduate when I told my professors I was of the religion of Socrates, Jesus and Gandhi, and wrote a petition to the British Crown to free India. How young I was, how young they are!

Yesterday Nathan came to me, his professor, a Kentuckian with an accent, and Nathan wanted to know about going to Maryland. I said, "Yes, I know. They will hate you in particular, Nathan, because you're a New York Jew Communist and the Klan is looking for you." Nathan grinned, looking noble and frightened and curious. I said, "Nathan, those people have a strange religion. The morality is all King James *Old Testament,* but the conscious ethic is all *New Testament.* It's their way of embracing the Chosen People and denying this pack of Jews in the same breath. In the South, Moses doesn't even cut any ice because he was an Egyptian nigger. It's all New Dispensation, all Jesus. And in the South, Jesus is a German. Have you seen those calendar pictures of Christ that hang on the walls of parlors and bedrooms all over the South? No? Well, Billy Graham looks like all of them in composite. There's a real case of life imitating art. Jesus is a real Luftwaffe Ace, as in Dali's insane painting of the *Last Supper.* It

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was actually hung in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, you know." I paused and stared at Nathan. "And, Nathan, don't go down there with any illusions about Southern cowardice. The Southerners aren't any more afraid of you than you are of them. They believe their cause is just, too. They really believe that Negroes are inferior creatures, an inferior species—the way you and I don't keep dogs on leashes because we're afraid of dogs. We just want the power to compel obedience from an inferior creature, and the leash secures that power for us." I waited a moment, then said, "Nathan, there's a bitter thing to dispose of, by action and imagination. When I was your age the enemies were Harry Bennett's company police clubbing the workers, and then fascism. Good luck. Watch yourself. And when you get back, bring Rama up for coffee."

Nathan is standing down there near the red door of the Folklore Center. I watch his tall, courageous, excited and false posture: false by a small fraction only because he is in love, as only a nineteen-year-old boy can be, with the daughter of a famous Negro expatriate. Rama is a startlingly pretty girl and Nathan is very handsome. They are too beautiful for tear-gas, fire-hoses, and dogs.

And here comes Hampden, reeling past the Folklore Center. He is near enough now for me to see his skewed tie, the coffee-blotted shirt, the jacket and slacks that don't match, pulled on in a drunk hurry, the slacks with a dark river down the left leg where Hampden has pissed himself: see the thin, neat hair, the expensive pipe jutting from a frayed pocket: even see the creases of distaste near his Mississippi-Puritan mouth as he walks in brisk spurts, in confused surges, past the line of Negro and white students. Hampden shoulders some of them, not accidentally, on his way to the Golden Pizza parlor directly across the street. Hampden, my old friend, an editor with Aegean House, a stolid pipe-smoker, a spouter of conservative publishing maxims in what he considers a crooked and opportunistic publishing house, calmly affirming the freedom of authors, the wisdom of scholars, deploring the recent "tawdry" under-the-table deals between reprinters and hard-cover firms which turned traditional publishing upside-down, Hampden the rational-seeming proper man who is also consumed by Rimbaud, Wolfe and Dylan Thomas, an editor who

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believes in the Maxwell Perkins myth of Creative Editorship, a man with an attractive and intelligent wife, a ten-year-old son who batted .580 in the Little League in Merrick, an energetic Deep South hunter and fisherman who takes five-mile walks in a tweed jacket rough as a Kentucky cob, with the gait of an Englishman, toe before heel, who swallows a hundred bottles of assorted vitamins and proteins, whose belts are of the thickest English leather, who does thirty pushups before breakfast and who is not convinced that Westbrook Pegler doesn't still have "something of the old verve."

And here he comes down the swingingest block in the Village, down MacDougal between Minetta's Tavern and the San Remo, jostling "the cheap integrationist bastards" in front of the Folklore Center. Hampden puts shoulder to shoulder, cagily scuffing ever so little, as if feeling out his enemy, as he jars past. Both Negroes and whites that he brushes wheel involuntarily, change faces quickly, but do not follow to trample the drunk white man. Nathan's face is alert, almost hostile, but open to doubt, because Hampden has jostled cannily, as a drunk man will who is shot through with hatreds too strong to become obvious until he wants to turn back, at some moment, and scream them. Hampden is on his way from Merrick, hungry beyond recall of eating, weakened, sick, stumbling towards the Golden Pizza to spend 20¢ for a slice of dough, tomato and rubbery cheese, trying to remember, I guess, why he feels he has to come up here to kill me. It is because he thinks I made a pass at his mistress.

Hampden had, by intelligence and judgment, worked up to a good spot on a man's magazine, then jumped to Aegean House, without even three hours of college credits. Then his wife spent four years getting a Columbia Ph.D., with an excellent dissertation on Alexander Pope. Hampden had spent his boyhood pleading for pennies from a sluttish mother in the town of Bucksnort, Mississippi. Then his wife tried to give him dollars from fairly well-to-do parents on Long Island. My girl and I were constant guests at Hampden and Regina's place, an apartment sticky and sterile as antlers with Danish modern furniture, given them by her parents. We saw the struggle begin.

From a confident, pipe-smoking, hi-fi-playing man who enjoyed his skill at chess, at carving a duck for his friends, Hampden

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became a wife-slayer who made laconic disparagements of Regina in our presence, in small asides which she was sure to overhear. After all, Pope was a hunchback, and any woman who would choose to do research on a hunchback—the inferences were clear. If Regina went out of her way to try, with all pathetic concentration, to bake Southern cornbread, Hampden mentioned in a too-quiet tone, that, of course, if one doesn't have water-ground meal, the bread is not to be compared with the original Mississippi Choctaw bread in food-value and flavor. If Regina put records of folksingers on the hi-fi, Hampden rejected the discs with a mechanical click that could be heard all over the room, a hard silence, a punctuation mark for his wary and quiet speech about young Communist folksingers, and that *anyone* knew if the words Lincoln or People were mentioned in song titles, the songs were Red, "the latest Bronx Renaissance." Puffing vigorously on his straight-grained Algerian briar, Hampden looked deeply at his wife, a Yankee, and at Fauna, who lives with me, and remarked as if musing to himself, "Funny how all my Liberal friends are putting their kids into private schools. They won't say it's because there are too many goddam stupid lawless niggers in the public schools. No. They talk about better math instruction and 'developmental opportunities.' "

Fauna set down her after-dinner brandy with a loud clatter, a feminine disagreement with Hampden. But Hampden had a sure Southern weapon against Fauna: he considered her much too beautiful to talk seriously to. Hampden could express his hatred of Fauna by shutting her mouth with a chocolate mint and assuming, with slyly gentle gestures, that she was much too feminine *ever* to disagree with him. With Fauna it was not so much a matter of taking Regina's side as it was simply loathing this man Hampden, who sat there drawing on his pipe in patriarchal grandeur, too much like her own unbending Spanish father, too perfectly encased in his own defenses, too unreachable.

When Regina began her research on Pope, Hampden began to cultivate a young woman author who, as it turned out, was a fine translator of German, one of the best in America. Hampden edited two of her books. She is Margery Parsons, and she is the reason why Hampden is coming up here to kill me. Last night after Hampden left his "other apartment" here in Manhattan where he

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shacks with Margery, I dialled his home number out in Merrick. Regina answered. She told me she was moving out and taking their son to her parents' house at the far tip of the island. I had to phone Margery Parsons then because I knew if Hampden wasn't back up there with her, he would be down on the East Side, drunk and challenging the retired fighters in Lulu's Bar on Second Avenue, and the old fighters not even glancing up when Hampden gave the trite, bellowed challenge, "I can lick any man here!" and the heads of the fighters not even moving, bored, and Hampden diminished to nothing, standing there crazily drunk and wishing: wishing for cut eyes and a dislocated jaw, a masochist in heat like a bitch for assault by other men. I knew they wouldn't even accord him a nod of manhood, wouldn't knock him into a coma but would grin at him, if anything, with the curious kind of pity that men who have been hit give to men who want to be hit. And there he would be in Lulu's Bar, stifled absolutely, or with his translator of Rilke, his sex relations with her only a stab at his recognizably intellectual wife—and how could a highschool boy from Mississippi try to kill the spirit of a wife who had a Ph.D. except to lay a lady-scholar whose translations and essays were "definitive"?

Going there in the winking cold lights of the Golden Pizza, Hampden holds all the darks and lights of honesty and deceit, tenderness and murder on his shoulders. If one of his friends was ill, Hampden would phone eight times a day. He would bring medicines, food, books. I could not begin to catalogue his spontaneous gifts to Fauna and me, ranging from Turnbull's *Letters of Fitzgerald* to a smoked fish. Fauna was suspicious of potato salad and fish. She said, "He just wants to patronize me because I'm Jewish. He just wants to get me out of the way so he can lay you, Richard." I said, "Darling, could you just try to believe, for five seconds, that he simply thought you might like the food?"

Often at night I hear Italian sausages frying there in the Golden Pizza, turned lazily and expertly by a fat-bellied boy who serves a greasy sausage and a smear of fried onions and peppers on a soft roll. He makes small-talk, New York illiterate small-talk with all the unescorted girls who come in: "Eh, ya dun remember me, eh? Out to da beach, yeh, Joneses Beach last summa, yeh. Ya hadda straw hat on." At night I often wake up, hearing the hiss of fry-

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ing sausages in my own kitchen. It is just an echo off the tenement wall.

But to see an old friend who is drunkenly burning his mouth on a slice of pizza just to get the energy to come up here and kill me—and all because I had to phone his mistress to try, at least, to find out where he was so I could keep him out of Lulu's Bar and the nut ward at Bellevue? Margery made the mistake of telling Hampden that I had phoned. When he got in touch with her from a phonebooth at 14th and 2nd Avenue, she had cooed, "Richard is *so* concerned. Are you *drinking* again?" Then Margery had to report to me that Hampden said the *awfulest* things, like I'll kill the treacherous bastard! And Hampden had taken my call to Margery as an attempt to cut his balls and throw them out into the winter snow, as he and I had cut pigs in our Southern boyhood. He would have been flattered, Fauna said, if I had made a pass at Regina. He could have swept such a pass away with a good-humored, superior, buddy-buddy gesture, as a way to caress him, too, through Regina's body. I said to Fauna, "Or maybe in an even more destructive way, with this wife and mistress bit, like the way a farmer will allow you to kick a mare he already owns, but not one he is going to buy."

Hampden seldom drank during the years of his increasing success as an editor. Instead, he read hungrily—as a matter of fact, he is better read than either Regina or me—and he exercised strenuously to stave off a pot belly. He teased me constantly about putting on weight, and when I pointed to his flab he sucked in his breath and declared, "But my muscles have *definition* underneath." Quickly he became a food faddist. He chewed lean sirloin, swallowed the blood and spat out the pulp. He claimed that was the way Marciano had dieted on the eve of a fight. He became exaggeratedly concerned about his appearance. Once when he visited his mother in Mississippi, he brought back a mysterious bottle of clear liquid that he doused on his hair; and, incredibly, the whisk of white on his temples was black again. A Chickasaw formula. He spent more money than he could afford on tailored clothing. His phonograph collection was large, but not so impressive as it was meant to impress us. I thought he had a lot of middling-to-poor stuff, but when I told him so, he didn't take it well, but very seriously declared that my academic taste, my formal education

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with its stultifying degrees had destroyed my ability to sense and feel genuine music. His pipes, expensive, handsome, varied in size and design, glowed in their walnut rack on his hi-fi-stereo cabinet. Hampden teased me about sticking to my boyhood tastes for fried pork, hot bread and pies, and for my habit of downing double-bourbons, "a poison which attacks the cells of the brain directly." He kept a generous bar, but there was a twinge of superiority in his gestures as he poured for Regina, Fauna and me. Once when I lost a train of thought after six drinks, Hampden remarked that he was glad he didn't require an alcoholic coma for a sense of well-being, that he preferred to keep his wits about him. And suddenly, as I lolled my head in amazement, Hampden dived to the floor, did a dozen fast pushups, stood erect, inhaled deeply and announced, "I won $500 on the first Schmeling-Louis fight. Any well-conditioned German can take a nigger." The fact that Hampden was about six years old when that fight took place didn't appear to faze him at all. After that, he sat popping chocolate-flavored protein pills into his mouth, chewing slowly and pontificating about the low condition of education. Columbia had gone downhill fast. Everybody knew that New York University was a joke. How could I teach there? Didn't I recall Wolfe's disgust with The Factory and its little Jews? Hampden could ask me this even in Fauna's presence, knowing she is Jewish but genuinely forgetting it because, to him, Fauna was a good Jew because I loved her, so automatically she was removed from his disparagement. When I said, "Goddam it, Hampden, will you cut out this shit?" he was only momentarily rebuked. He seized the word and spun into a long digression about how everybody knew that academic degrees were a lot of shit. Didn't we know that Ph.D. meant piled higher and deeper? Regina was embarrassed. Quickly she served coffee and cake. Hampden, without realizing it, ate two huge wedges of chocolate cake with fudge icing, while delivering me a lecture on my "perverse consumption of pork gravy and bourbon, with all those calories and saturated fats."

Hampden drank once a year. Yearly he went to his doctor for a checkup. After the data on lungs, heart, blood-pressure, etc. were out of the way, the doctor asked Hampden how much he smoked. "I smoke a pipe." "Oh, that's nothing." "How much do you

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drink?" "A quart per year." "Oh, that's nothing to worry about." "But I drink it in twenty minutes." Hampden could not resist the thrust. He wanted to see the doctor swallow painfully. What the doctor didn't know was that once a year Hampden not just got bombed out of his mind but prowled the streets, provoking fights, got badly beaten and was scraped up by the police from some walk or doorway in a dark part of town, and wound up in Bellevue Hospital, ill and penitent under Regina's solicitous gaze. He needed her mutely accusing, tear-filled eyes that he resented and loved. His allergy to alcohol was so severe that even on two beers he became belligerent. Walking out of a bar, he would say, "Dick buddy, I think I could take you." I'd say, "Hell, you don't want to take me. You're tough and hard, and I'm out of shape." "Yeh, yeh," Hampden would say happily, until his tension built again in another fifteen seconds and he would say, "I think I could take you, Dick buddy." When I assured him again of the mismatch—though I could have tilted him into the gutter with a finger—Hampden only sustained his frustrations which ran across his brain in little jerky ups and downs like the scrawl of a seismograph recording earth-tremors.

Until Hampden fell off the wagon twice, nearly losing his life the second time, I didn't realize what a corked-up bottle of unflowing violence he was 364 days of the year. His resolves, disciplines, defenses of a rural Southern combat infantryman in Normandy were the cork in the bottle whose label read: I am the whitest, strongest, most intelligent, industrious and virile man in a city of polyglot, weak-willed, lazy, tax-supported parasites in history. And inside the opaque bottle lay the preserved foetus of a Mississippi waitress who had left her brutal husband for a horse trainer. And the alcoholic father wandering in a kind of dazed, incomprehending sorrow from the ragged pine flats of Mississippi to the sour 50¢ beds in Manhattan's Mills Hotels for transients, and from those wire-mesh cages to his cobblestone deathbed under the cold iron lattice of the 3rd Avenue El near a Chinatown mission.

A faint smile on his smooth face with its large forehead under slickly combed hair, Hampden carved our Thanksgiving turkey. He praised Regina's stuffing—just the proper amounts of salt, pepper and sage, particularly the sage, which he said was the true

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test of a stuffing. It was a good beginning. Regina was flushed from the kitchen, her nicely-done hair coming loose a little bit, attractively, her generous smile warming the room. Fauna had sipped three martinis and her thin face glowed gold-brown with little beads of sweat and oil and her flecked brown eyes had gone fiercely soft like those of a puma. Fauna had let her hair fall down her back "to revive an old lover," she teased. "And besides, besides, Richard, I'm too old for a pony-tail, and besides, I'm tired of being the picture of a healthy animal. I want to be a sick intellectual like you!" She pounced down onto my knees. Her small dancer's body felt tight and expansive at the same time. I asked, "Why is it that most dancers get knotty muscles but you stay fluid like a swimmer?" Fauna put her nose against mine and stared, comically cross-eyed. "Because my body *sings,* you funny man." Regina teased, "Well! Do you two want to go upstairs before dinner?" I had had four drinks and loved Regina and Hampden and Fauna, loved myself even. But I became aware that Hampden had begun a sort of dreamy soliloquy, talking to himself again, but demanding that we hear it, just loud enough to register over the Montavani record on the player.

Hampden kept up a sardonic commentary on the writers, painters, lawyers he knew, and books he was editing. I didn't have to listen very closely to notice, actually to hear the pressured vapors of hate escaping thinly past the cork in the bottle: Mailer's tragedy was to have discovered sex at the age of 36. Woodstock didn't paint; he masturbated on canvas. Wealthy teenagers had torn up a Back Bay mansion. They ought, all of them, to be lined up naked and have their cocks sliced off by their homosexual Scoutmasters, and their loss bewailed by a chorus of seven-year-old nigger virgins—at eight, of course, nigger wenches wouldn't be virgins. Eisenhower should have gone into Cuba and swatted Castro like any other dirty fly, not play dead like that drunken Irish boy in the White House, *which reminds me* that history has a curious way of making events turn out for the worse. Hitler, a man of clean habits, of great personal purity, who could have unified Europe and made Napoleon's dream come true, who could have unified Europe against the Communist threat, was defeated by a semi-literate American paralytic and an alcoholic British Tory.

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Oiling the bowl of his pipe by rubbing it against the wing of his nose, rapidly chewing another protein pill, Hampden described what, to him, was the final ludicrous breakdown of a soft, liberal society. It involved a current newspaper campaign for safe driving to save the lives of children, and it had been touched off by the deaths of two children who were run down by cars in Jackson Heights. Hampden spoke with slow gravity. "That's the soft society for you. It tampers with survival of the fittest. Remember, Dick, when you and I were kids and our parents told us to stay off the street, we obeyed. We were intelligent enough to stay out of the path of cars. Any kid who is too stupid to stay out of the street isn't worthy to survive." And Hampden appealed to me for confirmation, as one old country boy to another, which was embarrassing in the immediate chatter of protest from Regina and Fauna. Then Hampden drove another nail. "Remember your friend Marty. Marty was a cheap little fag nut who had to drown himself in his own bathtub because he was a Liberal and Liberals have no reason to survive."

Fauna bristled. She had loved our friend Marty, whose tumultuous life and early suicide had echoed her own sense of brevity and terror. Regina rebelled because her husband was guilty of "a stupid generalization." Fauna cried, "That's *cruel* of you, Hampden. You know that Marty wasn't killed by any creed. He was killed because he couldn't find out who he was. He was the Little Prince. And there's no world for little princes." And Hampden grunted, "I distrust books by French writers who write delicately about wind, sand and stars. I'll take an American like Jim Farrell who belches, farts and screws women."

That evening turned out badly, worse than usual. When Fauna made a retort, Hampden let his resentment of her come into the open. He called her a pseudo-intellectual slob who read Max Lerner and worshipped Eleanor Roosevelt and *dabbled* in faggy dances produced by Charles Weidman from an Ohio humorist whose fables "reeked of homosexuality." When Fauna determinedly told him that art is no respecter of persons, that talent has no sex, that any number of persons with talent, be they male, female or neuter can build something beautiful, Hampden still could not back down without trying to construct another platform. Regina had turned on a television documentary about the

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Hungarian Uprising. Events had reached the stage where a Catholic priest was gunned down by Heydrich's elite troopers because the priest had hidden a few rebels in the basement of his church. At this point Hampden said briskly, "He ought to have been disrobed first, or unfrocked, or his *dress* taken off, or whatever those corrupt bastards in the Church call it. He was unfit to be a priest. He knew the Laws of the Occupation. The trouble is these gipsy Hungarians have no respect for law. Just like the Jews and niggers. Always breaking the law, then yelling when they are justly punished, *which reminds me* of a lousy book I had a hand in publishing. It was called *Rosaries and Rice,* or something. Lousy book about how when the Red Chinese took over a village where there was this nunnery, they made a rule that the nuns were not to play their radios for a certain period of time. A simple rule. So the nuns played their radios. So the local commander politely reminded them of the rule and requested that the good sisters comply. So, naturally, the nuns, taking orders only from Jesus Himself, turned on their radios again. So the commander quite properly confiscated all the radios. But this nun, this Mother Superior, this Chief *Dyke* or whatever she's called, yelled bloody murder just as if an atrocity had been committed, just as if she hadn't known the law. No civilized man," Hampden said, "could help sympathizing with that poor commander, confronted, as he was, by a plague of locusts on cultural loan from Rome!"

Hampden turned off the TV and put a record on the hi-fi. Regina sort of bubbled with her outraged lips. Fauna started to make a speech. Her father is Catholic, and though she hated him, she had made a kind of hazardous compromise with his faith by getting involved with Dorothy Day's brand of Catholic action. But Fauna was too upset to cope with Hampden. His unrelieved needling had reduced her to a stutter of nerves. She was sweating and short of breath. All she could do was gasp, "Vicious—hateful —vicious!" and try to knife Hampden with her eyes. I said, "Come off it, Hampden. Tell us something you *love,* for a change." Hampden tamped his pipe. He muttered around the stem, "I love truth. I love justice. I was just trying to state certain facts, *which reminds me* of what Pound said about—" and he was preparing to take off on another trap-play up the broken middle of logic when I shot him a glance and said, "Yes, I know what Pound said about

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Confucius, Roosevelt and the Virgin. What else you got?" Hampden grew silent, morose, and went to change the Montavani record for one by Nelson Riddle.

Fauna and I had lived together for about a year and a half. We weren't what anyone would call happy: either we were ecstatic or in agony, too high or too low, eating apples in bed and whispering or throwing them and yelling accusations. I'm older than Fauna and have sort of run out of hope, lost enthusiasm for many things that excite her, like sitting up all night in a cafeteria on Sixth Avenue, reading the Sunday *Times,* talking with our friends about "the nature of creativity"—all these futile things that the very bright and the very young delight in doing, these beautiful creatures of twenty who haven't yet discovered they will die. And the constant strain of having to try to make everything I said sound like an insight—I was Fauna's hero as well as lover—had got to me, especially since I ran out of money from the novel I had published and had to take this teaching job. I was teaching all day and writing half the night, and Fauna was bringing me coffee or bourbon, whichever, but growing restless about being nothing but a "dutiful beast of burden," as she called herself. When I was working, I would reach out as she passed my table and touch her thigh, not really paying her the attention she craved, and say, "You're such a perfect sensualist, perfectly oriented around food and physical movement." Fauna would retort, "All we have is passion. I'm so utensible! Is that a word, Richard?" Fauna would cuff my jaw and demand a kiss.

Before I took this job, I reacted completely to her spontaneity. We would be munching knishes on Houston Street and Fauna would say, "Richard, let's go ride the Staten Island Ferry. I want to see all that dirty water turn white!" It might be five degrees above zero, but off we'd go, blue in the face, I in a sheepskin and Navy watch-cap, Fauna in her latest garb imitative of the wool garments of Peruvian women, and a long shawl. When the wind slapped the wool against her face, and she was about half-shot on Scotch and Drambuie, Fauna said irritably, "Shawls can get *very* mad for having wind blow them in people's faces!" Brushing the tassels away like flies, Fauna looked very comic, very young, very dear. She liked to make up malapropisms that imitated her mood exactly. Squinting her eyes against the cold white

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foam in the boat's wake, Fauna cried, "I must go to an optimist and get some glasses." I laughed, "You want an eclectic skillet, too?" And coming back, half-frozen through the rough, dirty four o'clock morning streets of lower Manhattan, she murmured desolately, "I can't face it, Richard. This place perjures me."

But after I began to teach I didn't have many ways to indulge Fauna's whims and random motions. I couldn't go to bed at four and teach at nine very many weeks in a row. We had built up some tension, anyhow, about a year ago when she slept with a guy, a painter I knew. She had brought home a camera he gave her, and wanted to take my picture with his camera on Christmas morning. I needed fidelity from her, so I kicked her out. She went to San Francisco with her dance group and several weeks later, when she got back to the city, I felt guilty about booting her out—and besides, Fauna and I love each other more than either of us can care for anyone else, by far—so I found out she was working in her spare time for Dorothy Day's projects, like the *Catholic Worker* and the charity farm on Staten Island. I found Fauna and took her back.

Hampden had had to spend several weeks on the West Coast, trying to make big promotional deals, tie-ins between his publishing house and a movie studio—something he detested; he was certain that the Hollywood hucksters and the rich, ignorant Texans were soon going to own New York publishing and dictate policy—and he had flooded me with picture postcards, usually scenes of swank hotel swimming pools garlanded with "starlets," which, he explained, meant beauty contest winners from Missouri and Nebraska who have to blow moguls. I wrote back, "Dear Hampden, I have read *The Deer Park*. A day or two later, a short letter came. Hampden was at a manic peak:

> Hey, Dick!
>
> According to my mythical lady, a Vogelweide is literally a bird-meadow, and vögeln, in the vernacular, is "the bird," or as we would say, "to employ one's bird," possibly in a meadow. Now a small bird such as yours makes a very small impression in a meadow; however, an enormous bird with magnificent plumage such as mine makes every blossom quiver with its flight.
>
> Ho!
>
> Goethe

Hampden's glee about his mistress's publication was not simply

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boresome. He had called Margery Parsons his "mythical lady." He had become fixed on a little-boy's pride in the size of his genitals. I began to worry, and decided to write him a long ramble, more or less just to keep him company while he was out there in Los Angeles, but also to tell him about how Fauna and I came together again.

Dear Hampden,

I went to one of these absurd cocktail parties that publishers give to launch new books by writers who sell exceptionally well. This party was for Golding, and the fad is still on, all out of proportion to his accomplishment. Golding takes a thin slice of Conrad's decay theme and exploits it artificially. But I guess the Ivy League sophomores who have made Golding a best-seller haven't got around to Conrad. Before Golding it was Salinger, then Roth, and now it's Updike whose balloon floats over the city. Calder Willingham is going to puncture that one.

At any rate, I went to the party, and there was the standard young promotion whore who does publicity, etc., holding a martini out to me, with a professional smile. Did I want to meet Francis Brown of the New York *Times*? Did I wish to meet Mr. Golding? Would I like another drink? Oh, *yes* Aegean published your novel. It was a very big success, wasn't it, yes. I *knew* I had heard of you, though I haven't read your book yet, something to look *forward* to.

As you know, I was with Golding at the Queenstown Arts Festival last fall, and he was very English-charming, and his wife, too. But it's difficult to try to talk with someone whose work you don't admire. And I had no reason to want to meet Sir Francis Brown of the worst-best middlebrow review we have. (But I'd still rather read the old ladies' bookclub *Times* crap than the pretentious *New York Review of Books,* with its Robert Lowell orientation, for Christ's sake.) But after a third martini—it was about 4:30 p.m. by then—I had only one thought: to go back downtown to the Village and get my beautiful faithless Fauna back.

I don't really care, Hampden, if you feel it was good riddance when she left. I understand what you mean. But you must realize that you have a damn cruddy antagonism towards Fauna because she fights back when you attack her, just as your Regina does. But you don't have to carry your battles with Regina into Fauna's house. Fauna is an energetic kid of 20 who has to do three things at the same time. She has to love me, has to dance, has to pick up stray poetic con artists like a kid who never had a puppy or a kitten. She has to distribute the *Catholic Worker,* has to boycott schools if LeRoi Jones says so. There's a starved quality to Fauna, and I've run short of food.

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But there are many good hours, days, months even, left for Fauna and me, and I'm going to take them because I want her more than any other woman I've ever known. When she becomes restless again, and goes, she will yell and hiss and spit and grab a steak-knife, which I'll take away from her, and that will be her way of saying, I love you, Goddam you! Hell, I can see it all, but I want it and I walked straight into it again last night.

Before I got Fauna back last night, I had no way to see, to feel, no way to think and feel the same way at the same time. Too much university and strangeness of new situation with trivial details to absorb like cotton taking up blood, my blood. I need her to feel alive, to know myself. As we used to say in the country, I need her like grass needs horseshit. So there you are. Anyhow, I left that stupid party and went down to the corner of 6th Avenue and 8th Street where she was hawking the *Catholic Worker*. Years ago I met Dorothy Day, who runs the publication and the *Worker* farm where she tries to rehabilitate rummies, etc., you know, Save the Unemployed Union Men, Save the Negro from Slavery, Save the World from War; she's a fine and beautiful-souled woman right out of Bernard Shaw. And the only flaws in her greatness are (1) that she has a religion, and (2) she is optimistic about people who have to destroy themselves; so she has a priest bless the food passed out to these poor guys who have dedicated themselves, beyond recall, to their own deaths.

It was Friday, about 5:00 p.m., and snowing, and the *Catholic Worker* was out—a very good issue which has some excellent reviews of books on the Montessori method of letting children grow up freely (My God, how you and I could have used some of *that!* As children we never heard of freedom, much less felt it); it's about the Italian *casa del bambini* experiments by Dr. Maria Montessori; and there's also a good article by Thomas Merton in this issue. Anyhow, there on the corner in the snow, looking like a Dreiser waif, was Fauna, without makeup, looking thin, but cheerfully freezing her ass to peddle papers for one cent, one penny, because she believes in what she's doing. Fauna held out a paper. I stood to one side, out of her direct view. She was looking straight ahead, passing out papers, taking in pennies, aware of the presence of somebody, but not wanting propositions from strangers, only to distribute the *Worker*.

Only one cent?

Yes, one cent, Sir.

This is a pacifist paper, isn't it?

Well, uh, we promote peace.

I teach in a university. Suppose I get caught reading this?

Well, uh—

(I felt her disgust with an academic square.)

Give me a paper, please, Miss.

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She gave me a copy and I paid the one cent.
Are you a pacifist, Miss?
Yes, Sir.
To what lengths would you go to pacify me, Miss?
(I saw her shudder slightly and was afraid she had recognized my voice, or my corny humor, or both.)
Her voice was shy.
Why don't you come to one of our meetings, Sir? We have meetings every Friday evening on Chrystie Street.
The address?
It's in the paper, Sir.
You're a pacifist, Miss. You admire Lord Russell. Tell me, do you personally disarm?
What, Sir?
If I were to assault you, would you unilaterally disarm and smother me with loving peace?
You really should come to one of our meetings, Sir.
I will, if I can buy you a unilateral espresso afterwards.
(She smiled in confusion and irritation at a square, a hick, a simple con man, a recognized antagonist, a mocker.)
I stepped in front of her.
Honey, all you need is a red cap and a little iron pot.
Fauna clutched the papers to her stomach.
You? You? Oh, God!
With one thin arm she pointed at my face and began to laugh.
I started laughing, too. We stood there, laughing uncontrollably.
People passing by gave quick curious glances, as if watching two lunatics convulsed and about to collapse in the snow.
You! she cried.
No, *you!*
Richard? My own Richard?
She had stopped laughing.
Come on home, Fauna.
Take me home, Richard. Oh, God, take me home!
And that's how we got together again. And, Hampden, if she has to leave her "cruel Richard" I hope it won't be soon. I love her.
When will you return from the fleshpots of California so you and Regina and Fauna and I can resume some good habits, like going down to Mott Street for Chinese food?

Ever,
Dick

I read over the letter to Hampden. It didn't sound good, at all. I had pleaded my weaknesses. I had pleaded for understanding. I saw myself as a very tired man, excusing my failures in ad-

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vance. I had identified myself with certain of Hampden's attitudes towards Fauna. But this was not really quite true. It was too pat, too facile to be the whole truth. I know I love Fauna. I know I love Hampden. I know I love Regina. I know I love my student Nathan, who is going to Maryland to protest segregation. I know I love his girlfriend Rama, too. I know I am a loving and desperate man.

Since Fauna came back we have had a lot of good talk, good food, good music—like Horace Silver at the Village Gate, Cecil Taylor at the Five Spot, and Coltrane uptown. Evenings when I have to mark student papers, Fauna reads, waters the plants I bring home to her, dreams of living in the country. She wants to get pregnant and go to Kentucky, and me grow vegetables and her cook them, wants to "know the soil." I realize it's only her new kick. She says, "Give me pleasure. Give me pleasure and babies, Richard. They'll have my skin and your brain."

Watching, listening, I can't keep from loving her. Her hair swirling on a pillow while she reads, her hands trying inexpertly to cook Spanish dishes, her unique creation of a mystifying chaos: a loaf of bread on the flush-tank in the bathroom, the sink-sponge and her panties stashed in the refrigerator along with frozen shrimp and ice cubes veined with vodka, her clothing in a trail from bathroom to bed as if she were a pioneer woman captured by Indians and leaving bits of cloth for me to follow to rescue her, her eyes sulky and refractory, her face expectant when I come home, her rushing out into the hall to meet me, springing into my arms, locking her legs around my waist, kissing, saying, "Play horsey with me, Richard. I have a good seat, or a good saddle—how do Kentucky girls say it?" I play with her. We horse around, eat at 11:30, play chess until 1:00, play blackjack for dimes until 3:00. By that time I have drunk enough not to care if I have to teach early because Fauna has become magic and her dreams almost believable. If I could believe Fauna, we will have children and eat wild berries and buds and roots and dandelions and live on a mountainside where thrushes sing at dusk, and eat groundhogs and rabbits. Christ, I can see her face if I ever brought her a rabbit I shot, the head pulled off against my boot, the raw carcass skinned and filmed with blood. The poor girl would wet her pants, then puke. But, hell, I'll let her live in

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an unreal world for as long as she can. I love her too much not to try to keep her happy.

But within a month Fauna began to complain about being the body-servant for a "Goddam professor" who demanded coffee every half-hour. "You don't talk to me anymore," she said. "You don't take long walks with me anymore. Why did you take this stupid teaching job, Richard?"

She pushed my papers aside and sat on my lap.

"I can give you a year off right now, with my dancing bit, a whole *year,* Richard. We've got the money."

"I can't just resign, honey. I can't just up and quit this job after a few weeks. You know that."

"Job!" Fauna said. She clenched her hands. "All I know is you're killing yourself with this job. You don't write well anymore. You don't talk anymore. You come home dead. Listen. Listen, Richard. You remember what Behan said Dylan said to a cat who told him he had a good job. He said there's no such thing as a good job. A job is death without dignity."

"That's true, I guess. Don't you think I have cursed my poor-white ancestors in their Goddam cheap pinebox coffins a million times?"

"Richard. Richard, let's get out of here. You don't need this teaching bit. We've got money enough for a whole year in Kentucky."

"But, honey, what then? It's not just this job. If I walk out of here now, I'll never be able to get another teaching job in any college. And what other kind of work can I do that gives me summers off? The summers are what I have to live for. Then I'll come back to life, and work."

"No, Richard. No, you can't die nine months a year just to live the other three! Listen, Richard. You *said* we could get by in Kentucky, in the mountains, in a little farmhouse on $1500 a year. For both of us, and a baby, too, you said. Listen—"

"But, honey, we don't have money saved up ahead. We can't just go out there for a year and at the end of the year stare up at the sky and pray for manna."

"Listen. Listen, Richard. We have over $1800 in my savings account. Here. Here, I'll show you!"

Fauna leaped from my knees and danced to her dresser and took out a small blue book. She studied it fiercely.

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"Honey," I said quietly, "we spend that much a year on Heaven Hill and Liquid Prell shampoo."

"Don't be sarcastic, Richard. We have the money. See? See? Right here."

Her fingernail dented the last figure in a column.

"Please, oh, please, Richard!"

I said, "You have the money. I have a job."

Her face turned gray as lead.

Communication dwindled rapidly after that. Fauna kept a cheerful mask on her face. I tried, too. Each morning I got up, showered, shaved, and before I left to walk across Washington Square Park to the university, I put my lips on her sleeping face and kissed and pressed gradually until she was half awake, just conscious enough to know who it was kissing her face. I didn't wake her completely—her dance rehearsals were at 4:00 p.m. —but just made her aware of my love before she lapsed again into deep sleep. She would phone me at the university and ask, "Richard, did you kiss me this morning? I think so, but I *have* to know. Richard, did you take your sandwich I made you? I put fresh Italian bread with the leftover steak and lettuce and mashed potatoes and some cottage cheese, just the way—"

"Mashed potatoes and cottage cheese in a sandwich?"

"But, but, Richard, I know how you love them!"

"Honey, please put the tomato juice in the refrigerator instead of the toilet paper, will you, next time?"

"But, Richard, I *like* cold toilet tissues. And in summer I put my panties in the refrig. It's so cool and reassuring."

"Honey, go back to sleep, will you?"

"Do you love me a little?"

"Yes."

"You evil man! You're supposed to say a *lot!*"

"Yes, honey."

"I love you, Richard. When can you come home? I can't wait to talk with you and fuck with you. When you kiss me I get all these crazy things going. I'm Pavlov's bitch. When you ring your bell, I'm ready to go."

"Fauna, my darling."

That was the way it went. I'd get up and find notes stuck on the refrigerator door, the stove, the bathroom mirror—stuck with scotch tape or masking tape.

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Richard,

When you get home I will be at the A & P (a big sale) for some steaks and artichokes. Should be home about 7:00 latest.

Richard's Fauna

P.S. Had some day at Carnegie. Kicked some creep in the balls. He was lying on the floor in the wrong position.

(and)

Mah dahling Sugah,

Where did I get that from, I wonder!

I'll be at the laundry, the FUCK IT YOURSELF kind. Back about 7:00. I stole a bill from you. Your change is on the table.

I love you so very much today, all day—you'll never know, unless you touch me and talk to me.

"Titty-Boo ME," Lil Old, ah mean.

(and)

Dearest,

Even if we could not communicate last night, I still would like you to know there is coffee in the refrig, and that I love you. Why don't you wake me up, so we can talk???

Fauna Lawrence

I was getting up slowly in the mornings, dreading the spiritless winter days of lecturing huge groups of students—sometimes 140 at once—in a dingy old theater, a microphone hung on a string around my neck. William Butler Yeats and William Carlos Williams? I had begun to hear myself repeating things into the scratchy microphone. I had no communication with the students, either. And the bundles of papers, wound with rubber bands, were heavy under my arm. Home through the snow to find Fauna curled on the couch, fresh-looking, her hair washed and brushed, bringing me a drink, Fauna, hopeful of the kind of talk and nuance and careful warm touch that we had had months ago. It was pathetic, futile. I could not bring spring to her blood. She could not wait for my summer. I was learning the value of silence. She was beginning to learn the mysteries of speech.

One morning there was no note. I wondered about the last one, signed Fauna Lawrence. She had added my last name. I looked at her pillowed head, her Botticelli face. I walked over and knelt beside the bed and listened to her breath. For one moment I was about to raise the window, throw all the student papers down into MacDougal Street, make a phone call to the university that I had tuberculosis and was going to Arizona, and undress,

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and crawl back into bed again, and cradle her in my arms, and say, when she sighed and fed me into her, Love me now. And when you wake up, my darling, you can pack a bag for Kentucky. I kissed her nose, got up, went to the closet for a necktie, combed my hair, dropped three sets of keys into my pocket. I had been shown the cities and riches of the Earth, and I was dressed and tonsured for death. Sick, I walked to the table to pick up books and papers for a 9:00 o'clock class. On the coffee table I saw a packet of cards, imitative of IBM cards, with staggered perforations. Fauna had gone into the garish little booth recently set up two doors north by some Times Square con men, and had her "scientific character analysis" clicked off on cards by a computer.

GRAPHOMETER

FAUNA LAWRENCE

Address Nowhere

Street *City* *State*

Occupation Nothing No. 032850

I flipped the packet of cards. They read:

OFTEN YOU WANT TO BE CENTER OF ATTRACTION
EXPRESSIVE WITH A VERY ACTIVE IMAGINATION
YOU ENJOY HIGH STANDING IN SOCIAL GROUP
YOU SELDOM REFUSE A CHALLENGE
YOU ENJOY THE COMPANY OF THE OPPOSITE SEX
YOU PREFER A CAREFREE UNHURRIED EXISTENCE

And beside this crazy packet of little cards was a notice of the school boycott, scheduled for today, February 3. It was published in mimeograph by the Greenwich Village, Chelsea Branch of the NAACP.

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The first name I saw was Rex Tolliver. Fauna and I had met him, admired him, talked with him in Queenstown a few months back. We had all his records. We felt Rex was the best of all the horn men going, better even than Miles. There had been a bad scene. All of us were boozed up and I thought Rex had made a pass at Fauna, or they had made passes at each other, or whatever, and I had taken Rex's trumpet away from him and hit him with it. Fauna thought I had slugged Rex because he was a Negro. I guess Rex thought so, too. Trouble, trouble. Naturally I hadn't heard from Rex.

And now he was at the Village Gate again. I buttoned my collar. It was too tight. I went to the university and hung the little black cord of the microphone about my neck.

It was three days before Fauna came back. She marched into the apartment, not even buzzing but using her key. She said, "Hello, Strom Thurmond, how are you today? How's lil old you, Sugah? Still killing time with the college kiddies?"

She was happily, belligerently drunk.

"No doubt you have been celebrating the defeat of the Yankee Germans, Irish, Italians and Swedes in the Civil War—excuse me, I mean the War Between the States. Where are the pigs-feet, Baby? I expected a real barbecue with white whiskey. Or have you been celebrating your great SINS by washing your socks? That's the way the mansion moulders, Baby!"

Fauna went to the cabinet and poured me a double Heaven Hill.

"Here, Richard Bilbo Thurmond Byrd, son of Mighty William Faulkner, have a touch. Does that *scan* like 'Hiawatha'? Poet. Poet, my ass. You're dead and you know it!"

She examined her flowers on the windowsill.

I asked, "How's Rex?"

"Rex? Oh, he's great. You should catch him at the Gate before he splits. You should water my plants. Why haven't you watered my cactus—I mean my cacti, Richard?"

Fauna poured herself a thick drink on the rocks and gave me another. I had not eaten all day, and the booze became an angry electricity in my head and stomach.

I said, "You cheap shit, you cheap little whore, I can see you going helter-skelter for three days and nights!"

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"Oh, me!"

"Yes, you, you with your whore's habit of walking insolently before strangers, letting your whore's eyes linger. You, you'd crow over any bastard's cock any morning. I can see you!"

"Oh, can you now?"

"Can I ask honesty from you? No. You always imagine you're on stage. I can see you, you with your simple whore's pride, you can climb on the merry-go-round and hold on to a wooden horse's mane with chipped paint, with your own chipped and peeling soul. You think this is *excitement,* you with your whore's dream of the brass ring, with your childish fist full of candy you never had before. So wear paper money in your hair. Tape it to your breasts. Go ahead. Be Queen of the Carnival in a white dress, you in your flimsy parachute drop at Coney Island, you with your hi-fi mind in your plastic skull!"

"You—" Fauna began contemptuously.

I interrupted, "You don't tell me *nothing,* for Christ's sake. I can see you."

She brought me another bourbon, and I went back to work on some student's paper on Yeat's Crazy Jane poems.

"Can I stay here tonight, Richard?"

"Stay any place you like. Stay with Cardinal Spellman. Stay with Rex Tolliver. Anywhere you want."

Fauna went into the bathroom. I heard a bottle drop, and a short cry. When I went in, she had two rubber bands looped around her elbow, burrowing into the flesh, making the veins strut. She held a spoon with some white powder and a few drops of water in it. She was trying to warm the white solution in the spoon with a match. I threw the spoon into the sink and broke the rubber bands from her arm. I shook her.

"Who turned you on this junk? Who the hell gave you this junk?"

She held herself against me, sweating, cooing, with hungering mouth and thighs. I imagined her, for the past three days, going from man to man, the half-baked poets, the sleazy painters, the far-out jazzmen.

Fauna murmured, "Yours, yours, Richard, forever and ever."

"Yes, until tomorrow," I said.

Fauna jerked her head back. Her hair fell out in dark rays. Her mouth was dry and blue.

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Fauna shrieked, "You Goddam tight-assed bastard! You're just like Hampden! You *are* Hampden!"

She ran to the kitchen and drew my hunting knife out of its leather sheath. She whirled and ran at me with the blade. I turned her arm, the knife fell, her thin body crashed into the window. I took her in my arms. All at once she grew quiet. A half-moon of glass had fallen from the pane. Like two sleep-walkers we picked up the shattered glass and laid the pieces in a saucer. I led Fauna to the bathroom and washed her wrist with white soap, towelled it dry and stretched a bandaid across a small cut. I kissed her wrist, fingers, forehead, eyes. I took Fauna to bed and pulled her long hair smooth on the pillow as I entered and felt her ankles come to rest, crossed on my back. After she had come, whispering, "God! God! Oh, Richard! Oh, God!" she fell asleep. I got up quietly, poured a cup of black coffee, and gazed back at her, her mouth still except for small puffs of breath, her high clear forehead where black hair flowed like tar, the sharp little triangle of pubic hair, musky and curled, and her ankles that I could reach around with thumb and finger—all fragile, ill, her head full of father and me, father-Richard, and full of Thomas and Cummings and Ginsberg and Jones, all mouth and vagina, all ingestion and puking, all garlic and whiskey, terror and love. I had never loved and hated anyone so much.

I woke up about 4:00 a.m. A cold wind was driving snow through the broken window. I took a grocery bag and stuck it to the pane with masking tape, dressed quickly and wrote Fauna a brief note to leave her key on my work table. Then I went out and rode the subway uptown and downtown between the 4th Street and 125th Street stations, back and forth, until it was time to go to the office.

When I got home in the evening, there were Fauna's keys, as I had asked, and a fresh pot of coffee—her goodbye gift. Fauna left a letter under her keys on my table.

My Richard,

What is your day like? Mine is rejection like it was going out of style. But I know that we're good, if we just could be. *Some* contact is better than none, even if we just touch the same piece of paper. No one can touch, I mean muss up the place in me where the real words go and leave their placenta (s?). Fuck/hate/love. Do you know

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what I mean, my Richard? Because if you don't, nobody else can or will, and I will be too alone, I mean really *loneless*. Is that a word, Richard?

I went in your wool robe downstairs to the candy store and bought a green balloon. I swung the balloon across the street, but nobody saw it. It went up and up, and you were not here to catch it. Is this a terrifying play of/or life?

You keep me more than I can say or stay, but I *want* to stay. You are the only man I always wanted to present me to, like a gift. You are where I can keep from being a shit.

You have your bourbon to come home to, and your old cardboard box of photographs of your poor white parents. But I don't have any of this like you do. All I have is my Richard. I mean all I have is I am more than *sometimes*. Grass implies greenly soon, even under this snow we pile on each other. I mean I want us to be happening/happy.

Please water my plants. Please listen to our Trane albums. Please buy me a thermometer I can stick up my ass so we'll know when our beautiful fucking will make a son for you. Please phone me at OR 4-7200.

Fauna

P.S. William Carlos Williams died today. I don't think he cares.

I made a note to phone her late this evening. Then I went to the closet for a coat, to go downstairs and wrestle Hampden out of the Golden Pizza, drag him up here and drench him with coffee. If he had a weapon to kill me with, I'd have to pin his arms and yell for a cop to help me handle him. I went back to close the window against the snow. I saw Hampden come out of the pizza shop and take off, in a stumbling trot, after a Negro boy.

The Negro boy, about nineteen or twenty, was drooling drunk, and he was following a white girl, pleading with her to talk with him. Twice the girl turned and threw off his awkwardly pawing hand. The third time, she stopped stiff-legged and cursed him, her head thrust out like that of a furious goose, hissing at his pained and dejected face. The pity was that I could see he wanted only to talk with her, to be recognized as a human being, a man, a person worth talking to. That was when Hampden caught up with him. Hands clinched, arms stiff at his ribs, body rocking forward, Hampden began to shout.

"You black sonofabitch, where do you come off? You Harlem bastard, just because you're in the North, where do you come off? Do you think you can proposition a white girl on the

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streets? You Goddam black-assed CORE hero! Just because you can knife white subway riders and get away with it, do you think you can get away with grabbing at a white girl on the Goddam street? Where do you come off? Haven't you ever heard of Emmett Till!"

When Hampden attacked the young man, the crowd from the Folklore Center, and a dozen passersby, surrounded them. By the time I ran downstairs and pushed through the crowd, Hampden lay by himself on the walk near the curb. His shirt was soaked with blood, and he was bleeding from the mouth. I took off my coat and folded it under his head. I heard the hooves of a mare that a mounted policeman rode.

"Hampden?"

"Dick? Dick buddy? Dick, they had all these basketballs. They kept dribbling all these balls between my legs and yelling Junior Globe Trotters! Dick—"

When I realized Hampden was dead, I felt around for the wounds. He had been stabbed several times. But the young Negro boy hadn't done it. He was sitting on the curb, head in hands, in a pool of his own vomit. The policeman dismounted, came over and helped me carry Hampden's body under the awning of a liquor store. I gave the cop Regina's parents' phone number. I told him that I would take charge of the funeral arrangements in the morning. In about three minutes MacDougal Street was flooded red by the circulating lights of police cars and a police ambulance. A dozen policemen dispersed the crowd. On the walk Hampden's weapon lay, a small bone-handled penknife that he used to scour the bowls of his pipes. That was what he had fought his enemies with, and that was what he was going to kill me with, too.

I stood up, looked up. My students Nathan and Rama were staring at me. Nathan, with his anxious white face, Rama, in her subtle passive darkness, her octoroon shadow lightening and darkening as the lights swept across her face.

Nathan asked, incredulous, "Professor?"

I said, "Forgive him, Nathan. And forgive whoever killed him."

Their faces were tight, cold, unanswering.

I asked, "Will you have coffee with me? It's another forty minutes before your bus leaves for Cambridge."

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Nathan said, "No thank you, Sir."

The Sir sounded underlined.

"We were old friends," I said. "At least you could try to respect that."

I took a call from Regina. Between sobs she told me she had phoned a Veteran's Administration official at his home in Queens. The VA were going to fire rifles over Hampden's grave because he was a combat infantryman. I phoned Margery Parsons. She did not intend to go to the funeral, but was full of excusing words: "My husband and I have been *terribly* concerned about Hampden." I phoned the Department secretary at her home that I would not be in for the next two days and arranged for graduate assistants to take my classes.

It was after dark already. I put on my black suit and went downstairs again and sat in front of the *No Loitering* sign on the stoop, waiting. I took out Hampden's penknife and pared my nails.

It is impossible to know what is going on here. Certainly no one person knows. Probably it cannot even be found in the experience of all the people here. There is too much that nobody ever wanted or wished for, but somehow happened.

Some drunk Ivy League brat in a cashmere coat is burning up a beautiful TR 3 across the street. A weekend bohemian on the way uptown to pick up his girlfriend at the Plaza. A car moves through MacDougal Street: Chrysler convertible, New Jersey cream-colored tags: six lesbians coast on a pathetic-lively week end excursion, phys-ed teachers from some small New Jersey college (anyone for tennis?): a tough baby at the power-steering wheel, a bob-haired, full-fledged AFL-CIO dyke, leading a little colony through the hog-sausage and 20¢ pizza alley of MacDougal Street. God is their eunuch. God is the radiator ornament, a smooth chromed bird without a cock. Among Bronx guitar players, those callow descendants of Nashville and Hazard, the Chrysler glides, stops, moves, stops—you can't get through here on the tourist weekends—among the fat white girls on the arms of Negro folksingers, the lean Negroes and the enormous-thighed white girls from the Bronx and Nebraska with their ribby-proud Negro men who want to be white, in their dirty jeans, the sullen Negro guys who play guitars badly and moan interminable imitations of Belafonte and Ray Charles. And the bob-haired

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bull-dyke in the cream-colored Chrysler nervously gooses the accelerator, rocking through MacDougal Street. She tries to park for hog-sausage sandwiches with stale fried onions and peppers heaped on buns. She cannot even get close to the curb until the neighborhood boys with spotless leather jackets and tapered black trousers clear the way. The dyke makes a poor stab at parking. One of the Italian boys leans ominously, grinning hugely, and gives directions: Cut, cut, atta baby, cut. When the rattled dyke brings the Chrysler lurching in, all the Italian boys clap hands like rifle fire, and cheer loudly. The lesbians are aware that they are being ridiculed; they grab sausages and pizzas and hasten away, edging the long car out into traffic again, led by the eunuch God on the hood, back, by the Holland Tunnel, to Jersey. The outing has been pointless, the tension created is the juicy necessity to get back to the campus housing project where they can fight to exhaustion over the prettiest field-hockey girls, the sleekest tumblers, the swimmers in the Olympics Trials, the flat-chested breast-stroke babies of sixteen, smelling of chlorine and one-piece wool-crotch swim suits.

MacDougal Street has begun to fill up for the weekend. More out-of-town kids drift in: white boys with delicate bangs, tight jeans and sandals; girls with dirty hair, great wallowing buttocks and hanging breasts—they tumble out of old Nashes and Plymouths, sit on the dented fenders and tune their guitars. They sing loudly and offkey: "Ain' gonna study war no more . . . gonna bury that atom bomb right on the White House lawn. . . ."

Two fairies weave through the crowd. The older, brasher fag puts his arm around the younger fellow's neck, sneaks his hand down and pinches a nipple. The young fag, with a huge mass of carefully sculptured curls above a petulant face, chirps, "Don't be so indis*creet* in public. Now *sthop* it!" He leaps away from his lover, curtsies a few paces ahead, waves a white handkerchief daintily. "Well, come on, come *on*," he calls. He continues, though, to walk about four paces ahead, waving the kerchief. As he passes the candy store, the neighborhood boys cheer loudly: "Yay! Yay!"

As blond and bland as a calendar Christ, a long-haired and bearded boy in black turtleneck sweater beneath his denim shirt, and wearing faded jeans and rawhide boots, saunters self-con-

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sciously up and back through the block. He knows he is pretty as a picture and is more than willing to be looked at, his fair medallion profile and pale skin luminescent in the cold wind: Jesus, by Salvador Dali.

A little girl, directly in front of me, calls in a forlorn voice, "Glo-ree-uh! Glo-ree-uh!" There is a pause, then the tousled head of a middle-aged woman appears five flights up, beside her a delicate little girl about eight, her face wearing city-pallor, dying into death early, the little hands and scrawny hair. "Can Glo-ree-uh come down?" The woman's city-voice bellows, "Haf an howah!" The little girl disappears. A boy about six appears beside his mother. The woman takes him into her flabby arms, presses him to her rotund face. She sucks the little boy's ears, mouth, eyes, neck. He struggles but cannot escape. In a moment two girls of eight are turning a dirty rope, one end tied to the No Parking sign. Tourists and natives, indulgent, walk in the gutter among precise coils of dogshit so the little girls can keep the rope turning: "Step on a crack. Break ya mothah's back": girl-chants, city-rhymes for rope skipping, the thin stiff legs awkward, missing the beat, the rope slapping against dirty-fresh girl flesh, skinny, white, dirty.

A beautiful Negro girl idles by, eating a caramel sucker half the size of a paperbook. The Negro driver of a laundry truck slows the machine to a crawl, leans out and calls softly, "You gonna give me a bite?" The girl, obviously flattered, affects contempt. "I give you a bit on you ass!" He grins, asks, "You wanna pull my pud?" She puts him down. "You ain' got 'nough for me to pull on!" She returns the caramel sucker to her mouth. The driver laughs quietly and nudges his accelerator.

A Jewish boy and a Negro boy in their early twenties stop near the stoop where I sit and gesticulate frantically, arguing:

"Become a Marxist or you'll never get your freedom!"

"I don't want your help. You're passive. You can be appeased by the capitalists you pretend to hate. They will give you money, but they won't give me my civil liberties. They buy you off so you keep kicking *me* for *them!*"

"Okay. If you don't want my help, try to do it yourself. You'll see. You won't get your freedom until you come to socialism."

"Socialism! Huh! You're doubly passive. You're a Jew *and* a socialist. You won't help me!"

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They move on, still gesturing, toward the San Remo.

Two Negro men, middle-aged, poorly dressed and carrying a jug of red wine, pass. One says, "I hate em all. I hate all the bastards!" The other says, "No, man. I'm a good nigger. I'm a friend of the white man."

In a repainted, salmon-colored Cadillac, two young white couples, the men with open shirts, the girls with gaudy scarves tied over orange-dyed hair full of curlers, brake to a cushiony stop. The driver hits the horn. Above the two-tone horns, a rock-and-roll singer on the full-blasted radio yells:

> Let's get drunk and rock all night!
> All right, sweet daddy, all right!
> Let's get drunk and rock all day!
> Okay, sweet daddy, okay!

The neighborhood boys have closed in on the candy store. When a pretty girl who is walking alone approaches, they form a line across the walk, blocking her way. If she moves toward the curb, they move in front of her. They touch her hair, her breasts, her buttocks. Apparently the girls know the rules of this game. If they give the guys a free feel, the line sags, an opening appears, and they can go through. If they fight, they are in trouble. There are several dark doorways near the candy store. Some of the staircases lead to the tarpaper roofs. The girls know this, and they simply turn and twist and slap lightly and make remarks, but they don't make the mistake of becoming too obviously angry.

After a girl is felt and let pass, the Italian boys seize a little kid, a boy about twelve. They practice mass attack. One guy pinions the little boy's arms while another fakes punches to his head and stomach, and kicks to his groin. There is no quaint idea of "honor" here, of one-against-one. They are in the real jungle where a pride of lions will attack a lone zebra. The little boys learn quickly. In front of the candy store the leather-jacketed, slim-pants guys fake punches, wheel, fake, grab, feint—and laugh.

A Negro boy about sixteen pedals up on his delivery bike. It is a three-wheeled contraption, a big metal box on springs, with a bicycle frame and seat behind. Two of the neighborhood boys casually walk out to the curb and stand on the springs of the

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delivery cart. Jumping up and down, they break the springs, which fall on the left front wheel. Another boy goes up to the seat and crowds the Negro boy away. The Negro boy is paralyzed, afraid to say a word. He knows what he would get. The Italian boy wants to "see how the seat fits." He "fixes" the seat. Meanwhile two other guys in the gang break the right axle of the grocery cart. Without a word, the Negro boy climbs on his wobbling bicycle seat. The cart limps off like a crippled duck, scraping iron and rubber. The jeering calls follow him: "Dun it work bettah dis way? Da wheels is *even* dis way. Din I tell ya it works bettah dis way?"

I got up and crossed the street to the Golden Pizza. I needed cigarettes. The big-gutted boy in charge makes small-talk with unescorted girls who come in. He has a tic which makes his head jerk sideways every three seconds. He jerks his head, makes wisecracks, scratches his head, scratches his crotch, scratches his ass, then slices an Italian sausage. He says, "Da guy had five stab wounds. Yeh. Yeh. Right in fronta da Folklore Centah!" In unhurried moments he counts a box of Trojans under the counter.

On the lamp pole in front of Minetta's Tavern, somebody has pasted a crudely drawn cartoon: two Amos and Andy-type Negroes are kissing the cheeks of a white girl between them. The caption is New York *Post* Legislates Morals. Under the caption somebody else has chalked: Fascist Bastards! On the glass wall of the telephone booth outside the drugstore there is a huge advertisement for the latest wide-screen spectacular. And written across the heroine's exposed breasts is the legend: She Sells More Damn Pussy the Bitch.

In a doorway two small boys are exploding red rolls of caps with pieces of brick. As each one explodes they shout an accompanying "Pow!" Seeing me, they spring up and point six-gun fingers and scream, "You die! You die!" Their pale faces glisten with excitement. I sense the unreleased torture, anguish, murder in their young bodies. In their dark prison of bricks and criminal insanity, I walk past the wet smirch on the cement where Hampden's body lay a few minutes ago. New life has closed around that spot, its cancerous cell that will grow again, rapidly.

Nobody knows what is going on here. No man can make any sense of even his own life for the past week, let alone anyone

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else's. Less than a week ago Fauna and I sat, holding hands, in the Loeb Student Center of New York University where Erich Fromm gave a lecture, during which he said: ". . . violence is the experience of human impotence to change things and persons by means of reason, love and example . . . violence is the reaction of those who feel incapable of using their constructive human powers. . . ." I know that within three blocks of the lecture hall, while Fromm was speaking, somebody was being assaulted, right then, any *then,* in any moment as it transforms itself from now to then and is lost; it is lost in violence. In their vivid, hypnotic glee, the little boys shout, "You die! You die!"

I was raised in rough country. I've been shot at. The first time was when I ran up on a guy who was stealing muskrats out of my traps. I was sixteen then. Three days a week, I hang a microphone around my neck and lecture about poetry. I am thirty now. I come home in the evening, drink, dream. Every time I dream, I think I am alive. Every time I remember a dream, I think I have lived. But then I wonder. The disaster of life. Is it beautiful, as I had hoped?

My secretary at the office has a boyfriend who slugged her, blacked her eye, then threw her on the floor and kicked her ribs. That was less than a day ago. I saw her bruised face under the carefully applied makeup. Assault and murder are common forms of love. I think of the young woman crying for help, being kicked by her lover. I think of the poor Negro boy who simply wanted a white girl to talk with him. I think of Hampden, skidding away in the police ambulance, already dead. I think of a young man with a knife that went in five times, running from the police, who will catch him, or not.

I am tired of violence, and that means I am tired of people. People hide under the shadow of the word *inhuman.* But all acts are human. To knife a man is as human as to kiss a child. I am growing tired of people, and that means I am fed up with myself, with my own criminal impulses. I am tired of the horror of everyone and myself. I am full of the horror of people. We are too beautiful and too horrible. Once, in Kentucky, I had a gamecock that won five straight fights in the toughest pits. I retired him to the run. He was a magnificent bird, simple, clean, brilliant of feather. He was life clearly put. His internal principle,

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his purpose, was to kill and procreate. After that comes the vacuum of politics and psychology. Governments and doctors fail. I fail. Fauna fails. Hampden fails. The yet uncaught man who killed Hampden fails. Everywhere the failure spreads like waves from a single rock dropped into a pool. Love, the very ridiculous idea of love, fails. I do not think people will learn, not love, but the very least kindness to each other in my lifetime. I do not think I will talk about poetry again.

I bought two packs of Pall Malls at the Golden Pizza and came back up here to the apartment.

I lean on the sill in illusory light. In a random pattern other heads darken the old buildings. The snow is falling harder. About eight feet above the rusted cornices of the tenements a three-quarter moon looks motionless and scarred, not yet shining. In the street below there are many blurred shouts and cries. Across the street an old Italian couple live in their only window. The old man wears a white stocking cap indoors. Man and wife trim each other's nails, laboriously, attaching importance to the act, as the old do. I feel surgically removed. I try to inhale the odor of life, feeling a brief sense of being alive when Fauna gives me that dark-eyed unfathomable glance of the chronic New York waif with thin face, herself cold, frightened, her long hair and brown eyes gold-flecked, flaring, diminishing like lights in a theater.

At 10:00 p.m. there are insistent bongos, guitars, shouts, falling bottles. The long sadness of Catholic bells begins. The old couple pause in their single window and cross themselves. Bells from Father Demo Square. Night in a place far from Italy. Without their prayers, without their grief, the God of Peter would become sad as they.

The street boys in their black tapered pants, their black loafers, their white shirts open at the throat, begin to catch huge wet snowflakes. They begin to catch the snowflakes on their tongues. They field them as if the flakes were baseballs, pivoting with comic grace to catch a flake that burns out in one cold spot on the tongue, for a fraction of a second. They watch way up, to follow a flake as it enters the downdraft of the brick canyon, and trace it all the way down to a car-top or the pizza parlor awning. If it falls free, they take it on their tongues and laugh in crazy innocence below the huge snowflakes they take as sacraments on their tongues.

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One boy breaks from the gang and begins to dance in the snow. The others set the beat, very fast, with clapping hands. It is not like anything you ever saw at City Center, or in the phony *West Side Story* acrobatics. His dance is alive, real, final.

Somehow, maybe with lookouts, they know when a cop is coming. All the neighborhood boys disappear into the candy store, into the doorways. When the cop walks by, juggling his stick artistically, nobody is there.

The two Negro men, ignored by the thinning lines of people carrying limp slices of pizza, black guitar cases, umbrellas, are setting up their strange instruments under my window. One has a homemade drum, the head secured by strips of rubber cut from an old innertube. The other has a heavy string tacked to a pine slat and fastened to the middle of a galvanized washtub. Bass and drum. They get all set up, then nod to each other. They play and sing "Route 66" and "Come on to My House" and a few other upjump things. Then they get serious, pause, as if they were in a club or concert hall, to consult about the next number. Slowly, bluely, they begin to play "Sunday Kind of Love."

Nobody pays any attention to them, or to the coffee can they placed on the sidewalk for coins. They play the song in the snowy street without coats or hats, just as if everybody were hearing, or if only they are hearing. It doesn't matter. Their music rises to my window. Their sadness is slow, quiet, sure. They are dead before they start. They know that. We are all dead in this place: white, Negro: dead.

I try to imagine a time of love and goodness. I try to imagine God, or at least imagine a time when God may have lived. There is always a feeling that a human being ought to be more than a brick with an obscene word scraped into its face in an old wall. That a man ought not be in despair, alone, to die in the street, as Hampden did, or die standing up, listening to music, as I do now.

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MAY SWENSON

Sleeping Overnight on the Shore

Earth turns
one cheek to the sun
while the other tips
its crags and dimples into shadow.
We say sun comes up,
goes down,
but it is our planet's incline
on its shy invisible neck.
The smooth skin of the sea,
the bearded buttes of the land
blush orange,
we say it is day.
Then earth in its turning
slips half of itself away
from the ever burning.
Night's frown
smirches earth's face,
by those hours marked older.
It is dark, we say.
But night is a fiction
hollowed at the back of our ball,
when from its obverse side
a cone of self-thrown shade
evades the shining,
and black and gray
the cinema of dreams streams through
our sandgrain skulls
lit by our moon's outlining.

Intermittent moon
that we say climbs
or sets, circles only.
Earth flicks it past its shoulder.

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It tugs at the teats of the sea.
And sky
is neither high
nor is earth low.
There is no dark
but distance
between stars.
No dawn,
for it is always day
on Gas Mountain, on the sun—
and horizon's edge
the frame of our eye.

Cool sand on which we lie
and watch the gray waves
clasp, unclasp
a restless froth of light,
silver saliva of the sucking moon—
whose sun is earth
who's moon to the sun—
To think this shore,
each lit grain plain
in the foot-shaped concaves
heeled with shadow,
is pock or pocket
on an aging pin
that juggler sun once threw,
made twirl among
those other blazing objects out
around its crown.
And from that single toss
the Nine still tumble—
swung in a carousel of staring light,
where each rides ringleted
by its pebble-moons—
white lumps of light
that are never to alight,
for there is no down.

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Still Turning

Under a round roof the flying
horses, held by their heels to the disk of the
floor, move to spurts from a pillar of
music, cranked from the past like grainy

honey. Their ears are wood, their nostrils
painted red, their marble eyes
startled, distended with effort, their
jaws carved grimaces of

speed. Round and round go the flying
horses, backs arched in utmost
leaps, necks uptossed or stretched
out, manes tangled by a wooden

wind. As if lungs of wood inside their
chests pumped, their muscles
heave, and bunch beneath the colored
traces. Round and round go the flying

horses. Forked in the saddles are thrilled
children, with polished cheeks and fixed
eyes, who reach out in a stretch of
ambition, leaning out from the turning

pillar. They lean out to snatch the
rings, that are all of wood. But there's one of
brass. All feel lucky as, pass after
pass, they stay fixed to the flying

horses. The horses' reins and stirrups are
leather. Holes in the rumps spout actual
hair, that hangs to the heels that are held to the
floor that wobbles around to the reedy

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tune. Their tails sweep out on a little
wind, that stirs the grass around the
disk, where the children sit and feel they
fly, because real wind flies through their

hair. There is one motion and it is
round. There is one music, and its
sound issues from the fulcrum that
repeats the grainy tune, forever

wound in the flutings of wooden
ears. There is one luck (but it is
rare) that, if you catch, will grant
release from the circle of the flying

horses. But round and round on the fixed
horses, fashioned to look as if running
races, the children ride as if made of
wood, till wrinkles carve their smiling

faces, till blindness marbles all their
eyes. Round and round to the sagging
music, the children, all bewitched by their
greeds, reach out to gather the wooden

rings. And each ring makes a finger
stiff, as oil from the fulcrum blackens the
grass. Round and round go the flying
hearses, carved and colored to look like steeds.

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The Truth

A thick serpent
doubled up with and tangled upon itself.
So twisted, reiterated a heap,
the length and girth and weight appear impossible
to assess.

Speculations about shape amount to a counting
of the coils.

But crawling out or crawling in?

The head is buried
in the muddy middle there.
If that darkest lump *is* a head.
The tail or tails potential everywhere,
cuddled into the interstices.

Part of the difficulty
is the dim light furnished for this
exhibit—
part the heavy glass interposed,
misted with humidities and
exhalations.
All the offal of the opulent awful
occupant on *its* side,
our own smears on ours.

But in the rivet of our stare and vigil
rare satisfaction.
That it exists,
apparently captured,
apparently alive.
Though disinclined to display
any kind of dramatic movement today.

Could we stay till feeding time, indeed there'd be a show.
But no, that's only every thousand years.

A wonder in itself,
and titillation to our fears.

Reluctant mobility,
blunt ambiguity,
indeterminate extent,
obscure function,
undefineable source!

Rigid, yet oozing contradictory power,
the undemonstrative monster roils
our custard-slithery guts.

Sluggish gigantic whip we curse and worship.
Great gray boredom!
When will it lift, strike,
straighten into motion?

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A. ALVAREZ

The Delinquent Aesthetic

"Le moral, c'est le travelling"—Jean-Luc Godard

LAURENCE STERNE IS A DISTINCTLY "MODERN" novelist. He has the freedom, the total originality, the sense of a man creating the form from scratch and for himself, that we now expect of any serious artist. He has, too, the modernist's apparent indifference to rules, as though aesthetic formalities were, in the final analysis, boring, and the only vindication of a work of art were the immediacy with which it expresses the personality of its creator. Casualness, in short, was his declared artistic principle:

> . . . of all the several ways of beginning a book which are now in practice throughout the known world, I saw confident my own way of doing it is the best—I'm sure it is the most religious—for I begin with writing the first sentence—and trusting to Almighty God for the second. (*Tristram Shandy*, VIII, ii)

Obviously, he wasn't anything like as haphazard as he wished to appear. We know from his manuscripts that he wrote and meticulously rewrote, crowding the margins with changes and alternatives, in order to give his prose precisely that casual, dashed-off air, the surface flicker of a sensibility in motion.[1] Yet the effect he achieved with all this effort was of a fined-down disregard for art.

He was also the first modernist in the way in which he cut the novel clear from the constrictions of traditional narrative, setting it free into the realm of personality, almost a kind of proto-expressionism. Granted, he took his method largely from the picaresque novel; his masters were Rabelais and Cervantes. Yet the picaresque is essentially the form for obsessional story-tellers: one tale leads compulsively to another, as though the fate of the narrator of the *Arabian Nights* hung over every picaresque author's head. In comparison, Sterne seems not much interested in stories. Occasionally he digresses into narrative, but mostly he simply digresses, as yet another fascinating and seemingly ur-

[1] See *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne* by Wilbur L. Cross, (New Haven, 1929), 3rd edition, 471-77.

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gent side-issue crosses his mind. And these digressions, like his two novels themselves, are substantially without plots. The whole rickety substance is supported and validated simply by the flow of talk, talk, talk. It reads like a picaresque novel transformed into abstract art.

There is a belief, which Sterne himself encouraged, that he learned this method from John Locke and his theory of the association of ideas.[2] It seems to me equally possible that it was merely part of his Irish inheritance. Though his father, Ensign Roger Sterne, was English—an amiable Army failure descended from a long line of tough and successful Yorkshire churchmen—his mother had Irish connections (she, too, was an apparent disaster: a nagging wife and an indifferent, rapacious mother, she was the step-daughter of a camp sutler to whom Roger Sterne owed money.) Laurence himself was born in Dublin and spent the early part of his childhood billeted on occasional Irish relatives. Although most of his schooldays and the rest of his life were spent in Yorkshire—with intermittent forays on London and the continent—his work is controlled by the same compulsive talkativeness as you find undiluted only in an Irish barroom virtuoso. And he recreated the novel in that image, evolving a style of pure talk, of controlled inconsequentiality, irrelevance and continual interruption. This was a form both new and not immediately usable. So, although his influence was enormous in his day, it bypassed the nineteenth century, when the novel became more settled and staid in its ways. His lineal descendants are the heroes of Samuel Beckett's fiction, with their endless "qua-qua."

Given this lack of plot or even moral purpose, either improving or scurrilous, you are left for connections and artistic control simply with a personal tone of voice, the flow of casual, intimate, highly idiosyncratic conversation. Even *Tristram Shandy's* extraordinary gallery of eccentrics—Uncle Toby, My Father, My Mother, Trim, Dr. Slop, Yorick, the Widow Wadman—have very little substance of their own; they rely on the author's amused, vague tenderness towards them to make sense of their lives. They are less characters in their own right than obsessions held together by his indulgence.

[2] See *Tristram Shandy's World* by John Traugott, (Berkeley, 1954).

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This is still more marked in *A Sentimental Journey,* where the people are described hardly at all. It is perhaps the most bodiless novel ever written. Though incident is piled on incident, none really amounts to much, and the book relies for its effect entirely on Sterne's ability to buttonhole his readers. For that he had an unprecedented genius. He was master of some curious sleight of tone which sucks you at once into the most intimate and private workings of his mind. He had, as another Irishman, W. B. Yeats, said of a third, George Moore, "the terrible gift of intimacy."

Maybe this gift was so unfalteringly his throughout his literary career because he began so late and was spared a hesitant apprenticeship. His first effort, a pamphlet called *A Political Romance* was not published until the beginning of 1759, when he was already in his mid-forties; *Tristram Shandy* began to appear at the end of the same year. By the time he came to *A Sentimental Journey,* nine years later, his intimacy with the audience was instinctive and assured. Indeed, the novel is elaborately that of a famous man. Sterne writes as though from a certain height of success; he is knowingly a public personality, a fashionable figure on the literary landscape, confident and rather delighted by the exposure. The incident with the Conte de B****—who suddenly realizes that the shabby charmer who is begging his help in obtaining a passport is in fact a famous author—and the description of how he rode the circuit of smart Parisian parties are done with the evident relish of a man who enjoyed his fame.

Yet clearly something more is involved than naive pleasure in his success and his distance from his Yorkshire parsonage and half-mad wife. By 1768, Sterne's fame, his novels and his personality were, to an unusual degree, all of a piece. He had wholly entered the Shandean world he himself had created. The first-person narrator is himself a character from the earlier novel: he is Yorick, parson and friend of the Shandy's, whom Sterne had prematurely killed off in the first volume—mourning his decease with two pages of solid black—and then resurrected whenever convenient, thanks to a time-scheme which leaps years between lines and extends seconds through whole paragraphs. Granted, the personalities of Sterne and Yorick were inextricably entwined well before the final novel: Sterne called himself Yorick in his letters and even published his sermons under that name.

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But by the time he came to *A Sentimental Journey* the name was something more than a semi-private joke to draw the initiated reader into the author's elite circle. Instead, it seemed to sum up a whole nexus of Sterne's preoccupations: with wit and melancholy and death. Yorick the jester was also Yorick the death's head, and Sterne, who had spat blood with increasing seriousness since his undergraduate days at Cambridge, was knowingly a dying man when he began the *Journey*. So perhaps it gave him a soothing illusion of immortality to identify so completely with a character in his own work. More probably, it allowed enough free air to circulate between himself and his situation, so that his wit had space in which to manoeuvre.

There were also certain practical advantages. In part, Sterne wrote this last novel to clear, or at least to redefine, his name. As a writer, his reputation was, by then, vast and international, but as a parson it had suffered correspondingly. His difficulty was that, like most compulsive talkers, he could never resist the jokey, bawdy possibilities of whatever turned up along the way in his monologues. His fellow-clerics objected accordingly: his work was altogether too smutty, too obsessed, too unseemly for a man of the church. So one purpose of *A Sentimental Journey* was to prove his innocence. His letters at the time ring with the theme. He wrote to his daughter that the design of the book was "to teach us to love the world and our fellow creatures better than we do—so it runs most upon those gentle passions and affections, which add so much to it." To another, slightly older, young woman it was the same story:

> . . . I have something else for you, which I am fabricating at a great rate, and that is my Journey, which shall make you cry as much as ever it made me laugh—or I'll give up the Business of sentimental writing—and write to the Body.

It was even the same to his diplomat friend, Sir George Macartney, though the tone was a little cooler: "I shall," he said, "have the honour of presenting to you a couple of as clean brats as ever chaste brain conceiv'd."

Sterne had always written from his nerve-ends, with a quivering, edgy liveliness; the new novel was to show that this was genuinely the product of an intensity of emotion, not of mere nerviness. On the surface, there was something almost didactic in its

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purpose: it would teach people how to react, show them that the simplest incident—an innocent exchange with a mendicant monk, a peasant with his dead donkey—swarmed with high feeling. It would show them that the value of travelling was not in stunning adventures or strenuous sight-seeing or exquisite views exquisitely rendered back into prose; it was, instead, in the traveller's receptiveness to feelings, and the flair and subtlety with which he expressed them.

Admittedly, Sterne was cashing in on a fad. Almost twenty years before, a Lady Bradshage had written querulously to Richardson:

> What, in your opinion, is the meaning of the word *sentimental,* so much in vogue among the polite . . . Every thing clever and agreeable is comprehended in that word . . . I am frequently astonished to hear such a one is a *sentimental* man; we were a *sentimental* party; I have been taking a *sentimental* walk. . . .

Sterne took this London fad and made it into an international obsession. The word was adopted into French and German because of his novel. There were circles of Sterne addicts in Germany who studied the master, cultivated exquisite feelings and, after the manner of Yorick and the friar, presented each other with little horn snuff-boxes, promising, according to Professor Cross, "to cultivate Yorick's gentleness, content with fortune, and pity and pardon for all human errors." No doubt it was excessive; certainly, all this stood Sterne in peculiarly bad stead with the Victorians: he was credited with all the morbid sensibility and snobbish high feeling that they loathed. In *The English Humourists* Thackeray attacked him as a supreme hypocrite, flailing him for his combination of sentimentality and prurience.

To be disliked by Thackeray, of course, is a fair recommendation. Even so, Sterne has never quite escaped the charge of playing up his sensitivity. Even his defenders imply that he overdid things and, in his concern not to appear bawdy, went too far the other way, ending as a dandified tear-jerker. This seems to me to disregard the whole strategy of the novel: every exquisite moment is promptly undercut either by irony or by deliberate absurdity. Consider, for example, the much abused episode of the peasant lamenting his dead donkey. It was a kind of eighteenth-century death of Little Nell, energetically wept over at the time

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and strenuously savaged later. Neither the admirers nor the detractors seem to have got the point. Sterne ends the passage by drawing the inevitable moral:

> Shame on the world! said I to myself—Did we love each other, as this poor soul but loved his ass—'twould be something.—

The next chapter begins immediately:

> The concern which the poor fellow's story threw me into, required some attention; the postilion paid not the least to it, but set off upon the *pavé* in a full gallop.
>
> The thirstiest soul in the most sandy desert of Arabia could not have wished more for a cup of cold water, than mine did for grave and quiet movements; and I should have had a high opinion of the postilion, had he but stolen off with me in something like a pensive pace.—On the contrary, as the mourner finished his lamentation, the fellow gave an unfeeling lash to each of his beasts, and set off clattering like a thousand devils.

So instead of being able to lie back and soak in his feelings, Yorick is promptly embroiled in a shouting match with the postilion. Only when his nerves are so thoroughly jangled that he needs the release of a hard gallop does the coachman slow to a walking pace. The whole thing is a paradigm of frustration, and a joke at his own expense.

This, I think, is the rule for the novel, not the exception. The more elegantly sentimental the narrator's responses, the more absurd the after-effects. It is Sterne's particular strength as a comic writer that no matter how whole-heartedly he pursues high feeling, unredeemed reality keeps breaking in. So whatever the immediate propagandist issues for his contemporaries—for or against the sentimental education—it seems to me now to be genuinely impossible to read him as anything except a supreme, and supremely consistent ironist.

Perhaps that is the least that can be expected of an eighteenth-century wit. Yet Sterne's irony, like most other elements of his writing, has a distinctly modern taste to it. The incident with the beautiful Grisset, for example. Yorick, strolling in Paris, is more or less lost; "more or less" since he doesn't bother to ask the way until he can find someone attractive enough to be worth asking. Finally, he sees the beautiful Grisset working in her shop; together they go through an elaborate ritual of question and an-

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swer, she giving him directions, he repeating them to her, she repeating them back to him; he leaves, forgets the directions in a few paces, and returns; at length they settle down to an intimate *tête à tête* in her shop. It is like the mating dance of two tropical birds. Finally, by way of elegant compliment, he takes her wrist and feels her pulse:

> I had counted twenty pulsations, and was going on fast towards the fourtieth, when her husband coming unexpected from the back parlour into the shop, put me a little out in my reckoning.—'Twas no body but her husband, she said—so I began a fresh score—Monsieur is so good, quoth she, as he pass'd by us, as to give himself the trouble of feeling my pulse—The Husband took off his hat, and making me a bow, said, I did him too much honour—and having said that, he put on his hat and walk'd out.

The beautifully poised and pausing rhythm of the prose, by which Sterne passes off an outrageous situation as though it were utterly normal, is the essence of his art. It is also the essence of the modern "cool" style, the art of controlled and detached delinquency. Yet this is not a quality which has yet been expressed with any great subtlety in prose. And this is the crux of the matter when calling Sterne a modernist: the closest equivalent to his work is not to be found in any contemporary novelist; it is, instead, in the films of the French director, Jean-Luc Godard.

What they have in common is a style and an obsession, or rather, a style to cope with an obsession. By style I mean something beyond their elegance and wit and detachment. Instead, it is the ability to maintain all those qualities whilst not leaving anything out, whilst refusing a narrow, exclusive focus. The novelist's sensibility and the director's camera are so alive, so eclectic, that when they move down a street the whole casual scene is drawn into the action: "I walked up gravely to the window in my dusty black coat, and looking through the glass, saw all the world in yellow, blue, and green, running at the ring of pleasure." And the action itself is casual. The plot in Godard's movies may be marginally tighter than in Sterne's novels, but it is rarely more important. What matters are the incidents that proliferate along the route, and the way in which they are handled. In *Bande à Part,* for example, even the chief actors in the farce are bored by the robbery they are so elaborately planning; what interests

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them, and the audience, are the side issues—a dance in a café, a lesson in a language school. Hence casualness and unprejudiced receptivity become an artistic procedure. And this, in a way, is a kind of delinquent aesthetic: the artist creates a work at the same time as he comments, implicitly but nihilistically, on the art-form and the whole choosy business of art. Neither Sterne nor Godard seems to believe in anything beyond what is there, present to the senses, at the moment. Questioned by a pompous interviewer on the morality of his films, Godard replied, *"Le moral, c'est le travelling."* He was implying, to say the least, that morality is strictly empirical, since *"le travelling"* is a technical film-maker's term to describe the movement of the camera. Morality, that is, to be picked up, and discarded again, as you go along. Sterne has precisely the same unrehearsed attitude to what occurs. So both are delinquent to the extent of, first, being unconcerned with any preordained moral order and, second, in their seemingly delighted assumption that, beneath all the elegance, their protagonists are interested only in gratifying their momentary impulses—though without unnecessary viciousness; the wit of both is essentially gentle. In their worlds everyone, elegantly, sadly, in one way or another, is on the make.

This, I think, is the basic assumption behind all Sterne's ambiguities. For example, the intense, finger-tip flirtation between Yorick and Madame de R****'s "fair *fille de chambre*" in the chapter called "The Temptation." The narrator returns to his hotel to find her waiting; in that curious, typical, slow-motion narrative, where every slight gesture can endure for whole lines, he takes her back up to his room and then, little by little, leads her from the desk, to the door, to the bed, where they sit exchanging quivering civilities:

> A strap had given way in her walk, and the buckle of her shoe was just falling off—See, said the *fille de chambre,* holding up her foot—I could not for my soul but fasten the buckle in return, and putting in the strap—and lifting up the other foot with it, when I had done, to see both were right—in doing it too suddenly—it unavoidably threw the fair *fille de chambre* off her center—and then—
>
> THE CONQUEST
>
> YES—and then—Ye whose clay-cold heads and lukewarm hearts can

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> argue down or mask your passions, tell me, what trespass is it that man should have them? or how his spirit stands answerable to the Father of spirits but for his conduct under them?
>
> If Nature has so wove her web of kindness, that some threads of love and desire are entangled with the piece—must the whole web be rent in drawing them out?—Whip me such stoics, great Governor of nature! said I to myself—Wherever thy providence shall place me for the trials of my virtue—whatever is my danger—whatever is my situation—*let me feel the movements which rise out of it, and which belong to me as a man—and if I govern them as a good one, I will trust the issues to thy justice;* for thou has made us, and not we ourselves.
>
> As I finish'd my address, I raised the fair *fille de chambre* up by the hand, and led her out of the room—she stood by me till I lock'd the door and put the key in my pocket—*and then*—the victory being quite decisive—and not till then, I press'd my lips to her cheek, and, taking her by the hand again, led her safe to the gate of the hotel.

This is *double entendre* raised to high art. The lines I have italicised could as easily describe the act of making love as the reasons for abstaining from it. So who is conquered in "The Conquest": Yorick or "the fair *fille de chambre*"? Sterne avers that it is the former, but the whole passage seems to point the other way.

It was presumably this kind of moral punning that Coleridge objected to in his *Literary Remains*:

> With regard to Sterne, and the charge of licentiousness which presses so seriously upon his character as a writer, I would remark that there is a sort of knowingness, the wit of which depends, 1st, on the modesty it gives pain to; or, 2ndly, on the innocence and innocent ignorance over which it triumphs; or, 3rdly, on a certain oscillation in the individual's own mind between the remaining good and the encroaching evil of his nature—a sort of dallying with the devil—a fluxionary art of combining courage and cowardice, as when a man snuffs a candle with his fingers for the first time, or better still, perhaps, like that trembling daring with which a child touches a hot tea-urn, because it has been forbidden; so that the mind has its own white and black angel. . . . We have only to suppose a society innocent, and then nine-tenths of this sort of wit would be like a stone that falls in snow, making no sound, because exciting no resistance; the remainder rests on its being an offence against the good manners of human nature itself.

To some extent this is justified, but only by virtue of misreading

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the tone of the man. Sterne seems to snigger only if read with the bias of nineteenth-century moral solidity and assurance. Judged by the more improvised standards he seems to have shared with the mid-twentieth century, the nastiness disappears entirely. The joke is there for those who can see it, but is not insistent enough to offend those who can't. Either way, it remains a joke; the criterion is enjoyment; the author demands simply that the reader relish as much as he does the full, ambiguous subtlety of the situation, with no moral *parti pris.*

Yet neither Sterne nor Godard are as cool as they would appear. Rather, their coolness is what William Empson once called "a style from a despair." Under it runs a continual, plangent note of obsession. With Godard the obsession is single: it is with a girl —embodied usually by the beautiful Anna Karina—baffling, ungettable, promiscuous yet frigid, narcissistic, rejecting, and yet, with her queer honesty, always a bit pathetic, almost innocent, certainly lost. The camera becomes an instrument of his obsession, as though he were trying with it to catch something of her elusiveness and fix it on film for keeps. Sterne, by his own confession, also thought of himself as a man obsessed by women, a perpetually pining lover. It seems to me to be nearer the truth to say that he was obsessed by feeling itself. Hence that extraordinarily consistent air of suspended eroticism which runs through most of *A Sentimental Journey,* a continual, quivering, aroused nervousness. Granted, he was constantly undercutting it, as I suggested earlier; so it became an irritant instead of a destroyer of wit. Yet there is a curious rawness about his sensibility: he is so quick and aware and brimming with responses that he writes as though he had one skin too few.

That is natural enough, considering the circumstances under which he wrote this last book. He was in the final months of his life, knowingly dying of consumption, racked by the after-effects of a savage cure for venereal disease, and desperate at the loss of a woman with whom he was—or imagined himself to be—violently in love. Mercifully, none of this gets into the *Journey.* Instead, it is chronicled at length in his *Journal to Eliza,* which was written literally in tandem with the novel. The *Journal* was never intended for publication; he kept it solely for the benefit of his latest passion, a Mrs. Elizabeth Draper, who had unwillingly left

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him to return to her elderly husband in India. He planned to give it to her when they were reunited to show how painfully he had endured her absence. So to say that it is a terrible production —indulgent, self-pitying, hysterical—is beside the point. Yet by the tiresome excess itself, the *Journal* somehow validates the *Journey*. For it helps to define a quality in the wit which is otherwise hard to pin down. I mean the sense, which Sterne also shares with Godard, that the wit, for all its cool, is romantic; it is based on an illusion, even an idealism of feeling. But it is redeemed from common sentimentality because the artist is so quick and subtle and perceptive that he sees through the illusions long before the reader. Indeed, the illusions are a force impelling him into wit. So he undercuts them before anyone else has the chance.

This precarious poise is difficult to maintain at the best of times. And all the evidence seems to show that *A Sentimental Journey* was, in fact, written at the worst of times, with illness, heartbreak and death all crowding in one on another—not to mention the unexpected return of his nagging wife, which prematurely put a stop to the *Journal*. Yet it was through this private record that he managed to draw off the excess of feeling—that emotional rawness which consumptives are particularly prey to—leaving himself free to mock himself in his real art, leaving his urban, and supremely urbane irony in complete mocking control. This is why *A Sentimental Journey* was finally not quite the spotless and improving novel he threatened in his sickness and depression. The witty, sharp-edged, casual monologue, perceptive almost to the point of over-breeding, and so cool that it begins with a casual remark and ends in the middle of a sentence in the middle of a bawdy story, was an infinitely more difficult work of art to achieve.

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VINCENT STEWART

The Wedding

(for V. and L. D.)

1

Before the wedding you proposed that you
would never play the nervous groom; instead,
you'd meet it calm, as sensible men do.

On Wednesday night you dreamed of her—you had
an argument—she had begun to smoke—
although to others smoking's not so bad.

On Thursday night you dreamed you turned and spoke
to the assembled wedding guests, and told
how you'd avoided starting marriage broke.

On Friday night you dreamed that it turned cold
in August, that the church beams broke in two
because the world had changed and beams grow old.

Before the wedding all the skies were blue
with clouds, in spite of all that you could do.

2

During the wedding you could feel the guests
all anxious for some sign of who-knows-what—
something with which a marriage is not blessed—
since they expected you would share their lot.

You thought the organist would never end
her prelude and get on with things at hand.
The waiting would not let the moments blend
into a ceremony. All was bland.

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They laid the aisle cloth without incident;
the bridesmaids hesitated down the aisle;
the bride approached in white, her bouquet mint;
you took your place, still trying not to smile.

Then you were out, the aisle cloth pushed away;
you stood in line, not knowing what to say.

3

After the wedding you both cut the cake
and joked about your being man and wife.
You posed for pictures in all sorts of groups.
And then you went to check the gifts, to see
which ones you didn't want, though not to keep
a one was not your thought; you made your loops
around the table, measuring your life.
And silently you totaled up the take.

Then finally she went upstairs to dress,
while you went out to check up on the car,
to find that kid stuff painted on the glass.
So you start out like everyone at last,
secure in knowing that you've traveled far
toward what it is you designate success.

Love: On and Off Main Street

1

Buying tickets from a kewpie
doll like a white rose permatized
in a glass bell for memory,
a boy and girl seek themselves in
reflections. They sit to the left
of the aisle and live inside
the air-tight dome of their embrace.

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2

Stars are no illumination
when two children kiss and their hands
wander in the exploration
of sensation and perception:
his phallus lying along his
leg—her body instructing her
to use it for her suicide.

3

Two boys drive out a country road.
Guilt takes the piercing taste of love
and leaves dry non-citric lemon.
They try to find the thing they need
inside two much-unzippered flies
and that masculine pulchritude
that fools the world and murders them.

4

Down an eighteenth-century street,
in a delivery alley,
peroxide hair brushes the face
of a boy, an initiate
of schoolhouse washrooms, cigarettes
half-smoked, and jokes half-said. Two blocks
away, matrons chat over bridge.

5

The girl lies dreaming of the vows
she took five hours earlier,
while the man who has married her
comes out of the hotel bathroom.
A tremble passes down her legs,
and he expresses hard desire,
but neither one is satisfied.

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6

She comes home from the cafe where
she washes dishes and floors for
seventeen a week. He comes home
off the garbage truck where he makes
twenty-five a week. They lie there
in a red-iron bed without sheets.
Their children listen to their grunts.

7

They drive sixty-eight miles to eat
so that no friends can spy on them.
They find their love in motel rooms
and in her duplex. They think they
know each other well and neither
tells the other when he or she
misjudges what the partner needs.

8

The motel room contains one bed,
one dresser, one desk, and one chair,
and when the floor lamp is turned out
the traveling salesman forgets
the broken nose and the bad teeth
of the woman who lies with him:
her sex loose, she costs five dollars.

9

She touches him with a pale hand,
caressing his super-organ
and telling him to please be cruel.
She makes believe that he rapes her
as he pushes in her with force.
She bites her lower lip as she
tries to remember his color.

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10

The old man turns in bed, raging
at her hair, done up in curlers.
He thanks his god that she does not
wage war on every patch of hair:
she does not yet erect a gate
moulded in metal and plastics
in front of the entrance to love.

Guttenburg, Iowa

1

An old woman's shoes,
one pointed to the right,
one pointed straight ahead, walk down
a sidewalkless street where she has found
a path on the grass. She might
walk in the street but doesn't dare.
She has to choose
the street or the grass or go nowhere.

When she is sick
she'll take her place in one
of twenty beds the hospital affords
and happy as if she'd gone to Lourdes,
she'll watch her suffering run
into the coffers of the church,
into each brick
of sanctuaries where sinners lurk.

2

Ten thousand water-skiers come each year
to see the river and to hear
the townfolk curse the place

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where they are born,
where sisters drown
and floods destroy the corn,
and where farmers race
each other to the polls
to keep their strangle-hold
on all the business in the state,
where midnight lovers every one are found
and if it's not too late,
made honest in the church,
where rules are made to keep
and one does wrong to search
for reasons.
Habit must run deep.

3

The streets, uncurbed, unguttered,
look unfinished and unsightly.
Down where the federal authorities have made their own
encampment clean-paved streets mark fresh-mown lawns,
and there alone
life's fresh and things are slightly
new, not cluttered

with the residue
of old surveyors' arguments,
that flourish, nourished by the wet manure of stubbornness.
Around the town the lares are not satisfied unless
society is bent
unto the few.

Love Moment: Truth

I suffer your thighs, your body forking mine,
your lips against my lips, your tongue searching
my chest-hollows as my tongue searches yours.

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My mouth consumes your holy host; our hands
burn white together.

Our backs are arched, as if
we bridge a crevice filled with harping winds
that almost pull us from our head and footholds.
No single passion lives to copulate;
no single piercing tears the guts, the lips,
and dryly quenches thirst.

This is a double
burial between the thighs, a taste
of citric dryness, lasting much too long
for pleasure, ending much too soon for pain.

The Pond

The heat has settled on the pond—
oppressing all—even the wind.
Without the wind the water stays
like silk stretched taut, excepting where
the excess pours under the log
laid down across the overflow.
The pond is filled with blackened snags
which mark the trees the water killed.

Two yellow-bellied snakes entwine
high on the berry-fertile dam,
until they feel the slashing hoe
brought not for snakes, but just for worms.
Then wind strides in to turn the silk
to seersucker and back to silk
as heat sits back to cover all.

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LELAND HICKMAN

Lee Sr Falls to the Floor

his breathing unthrobs

Rerun that The fumes
tremble in the terrifying heat
Lee Sr falls to the floor

Rerun that Lee Sr crumples
angular on linoleum
gasps in the kitchen glare

Rerun Lee Sr falls down
in jockey shorts A wooden
chair topples on its side smacks
the floor back goes
his balding head clawed
by ache

Rerun the gasp

Rerun these inchings thru
instantaneous reruns with
a feel to the eyes of
unfocused imagery

Rerun that Lee Sr crumples.
dead. In the bed down
the halflit sweating hall
his greyveined mistress
sleeps out of life whose
fleshings creamed his dark.
The boy her grandson falls
in the hallway hands gripped
to the urgent splitting of
time away his pajamas
drenched with the wet

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of fire quenching fire They're
dead and so the fumes
have no more purpose no
effect effected
by agents out of time
who do not know the job is
done who never despair
never tire never quit

Gasp in the kitchen's glare
in the halflit sweating hall
the deadly fumes Speak from eyes
ears taste touch gut:

Rerun all

this: the fumes rise
as nearsighted Clifford
peers thru deathsprinkled glass
raps shatters the glass
trembling at the hot
voom of decayed breath
And walks thru the dark
living room rapidly no
rerun that inches thru
the black toward the
flame of the heater no
paralyzed coughs waits.
afraid to move utterly.
toward the light from the hall.
slashed across the floor.
squinting Clifford.
afraid to move utterly.

Rerun! Instantaneously
dashes toward the light
sees peripherally someone still
in a shadowed bed
down the lungdamp hall—
stilled creamdark fleshings

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whose images fumed and flamed—
hurries thru the hall over
the dead boy peers
thru the kitchen's glare sees
one bare foot gelid blue.

'I am a tiny child'
whimper the words in him
as the floor slides back
as the boy dies
whose death it is
as he sweats for the warm
still halfseen someone.

We take a greyhound bus,
we run to an angry dad.

Rerun that We go home

Cliff
stoops to lift the broken
chair and slumps down staring
at a hole in the brown linoleum, near
his father's bent bare
unfocused image
fixed in fleshings as
creamy blue and as stiff as
two days dead and never before
beaded with sweat like this final sweat

And now rerun
the gasp the ache the urgent
splitting the stumbling fall
the toppling chair the
quitting the rapping the
rapping the breaking glass and
the personages as
flickering stills the
personages muffled I

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hang up I tell my brother John We board
a greyhound bus We
go home holding our
breaths in fear
that our breaths will vanish
claimed by an angry god

No, rerun that We go home:
We just / go home .

PHILIP LEVINE

Winter Rains

Cataluñia

I
The Pegasos are steaming
in the rain like scared horses,
and the horses gasp and gasp
to hold their scalding treasures.

Mules, donkeys, women in black,
men in plastic envelopes,
all the unread messages to God
that one cop holds back.

Leathered, gauntleted, and armed;
when the light falls his halo
begins to pulse, and his eyes
behind blank goggles see no

evil they can't master, no
hidden feature they can't place.
The white sword of his raised arm
drops like justice, and we go.

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II
His right side drags under the weight
of his tommy gun. He lifts the sling
with his thumb; it is habit,
it is the shrug of a silent man

under the weight of everything.
We stand beneath a tree, side by side,
like two men at a bar, facing the mirror
of the world, he the warrior

with a corked and rusting weapon,
and I the child who has never killed
Mother is cross. Her boys are huddled
and stamping out in the dark rain

III
Waiting to go out
I stand with my coat
but the rain doesn't stop.
A lake grows in my street.

Up the hill the rents grow
and the waters pour down. The moans
of the drowned stall and start
and stall like a mule cart.

And seen from above
even the sea is abstract,
that corner of his art
which bears the signature.

IV
The unfinished wall
keeps to itself
like a wounded mountain.
The air is unsafe.

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Birds are holding
themselves with their brothers,
the stones; they breathe
like carburators

and glisten in the late light.
The stones have shut
their eyes. If it is night,
if it is the long sigh

of dynamite,
if it is too late
to huddle in flooded cellars,
they don't care.

V

In March these fields of nettles
will bear a white scum,
the sour afterthought of heaven,
and the pinpoints of wildflowers

will sprout from nowhere
like the late blossoming
of saints. By a rotting shed,
untethered now, a horse bows

under the fine whippings of rain.
The fields float in his eyes,
the battered arks of husks
spinning and bobbing all day,

until the sky darkens and calms,
and calms the surface of these waters,
and weighs down and calms his eyes
and spreads their darkness like a sigh.

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JACK MARSHALL

El Jefe

Past midnight and he's still up
nursing his third Scotch and soda,
eyeing the coded messages that snake along the floor
like a cobra swaying to his tune
in a wing of the star whose light we live on—
not flickering blue or red, or shifting, but white;

white as the sheen of a dinnercloth; a footman's livery;
white as a blank check;
white as a new motor that purrs at a touch;
white as newsprint about to be blackened;
white as a hallway a-click with boots;
white as the flash of an explosion;

he sits in the center of the star fallen into the Potomac,
his fist full of telegrams he worries over
like a doctor over a heartbeat,
for his flock, snoring away their back-talk
in the warmth of the fold he is sworn to protect
and prolong unto another generation
blessed with obedience, and another and another
till the whole world swells with well-wishers. . . .

He wants to be out there with his boys, hooting
in the cockpit, where hot moonglow boils down
and night is the enemy;
night that has designs on us—and in us;
it is dark, it deceives, it prowls
on its belly, it is not white.
Light up the blackness with the radiance of G.E.;
anything that moves, moves against us
till the earth is ablaze with searchlights
outshining the nightmare flying low as we wake.

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I Had Come to Hope for Something

like the fawn-colored flanks
of that young mountain goat
leaping
over grey boulders—
pink hind legs scampering
downslope for cover
under the eyes of its mother,
the bus scattering the road,
butterflies, bugs, spattering the windows. . .

A quick glance of something wild—
lord puma's sun-pelt
below rock-ledge
darting
among cactus and shale flakes—
beauty not waiting for recognition. . .

And down further, the valley, red blooms
and yellow braided jacaranda leaves
yanked back, when I looked,
into the muddy arroyo—
that too,

I had wanted to bring back
something of all that loveliness
glimpsed
a moment, then gone—
to make something wild of our own—

something, whose father is fish
whose mother is water,
after three months shaping
in a darkness out of hand,
is taken back,
wildly, like driftwood
in the sea
in the sea

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

The Great Grey Whitney

MARCEL BREUER'S NEW BUILDING FOR THE WHITNEY MUSEUM, on the corner of Madison Avenue and 75th Street, is one of the most conservative as well as one of the best buildings to be built in New York in a long time. Its conservatism is obvious not only in the sobriety of its forms and the elegance of its finish, but in the medieval quality it at once suggests. The building has a sort of Byzantine hardness (Byzantine in the poetic rather than the historical sense) reminiscent of that quality in St. Trophîme at Arles which led Van Gogh to refer to it as "a Chinese nightmare," but it is a hardness which manages to be not at all unsympathetic. In many ways, the building is a medieval fortress turned inside out, as Saarinen's CBS building is a cathedral turned inside out. In the case of the CBS building, the medieval quality is suggested most by the opening and closing of the building as one walks around it, like the opening and closing of the nave of a cathedral as one walks down it. In the case of the Whitney, the graduated overhang and deep reverse window reveals lend it the inside-out fortress quality. In both cases, the architects have been wise enough to realize that since buildings in New York get black all too soon, they may as well start out black, and that a city as increasingly forbidding as New York deserves a forbidding architecture and one that, internally, provides a sense of haven from the street.

The new Whitney is practically invisible until one is underneath it, partly because of the nature of the urban configuration in New York and partly because of the height of the buildings around it. As one approaches it from the south up Madison Avenue it is further obscured by the 69th Street hill. But from nearby, the building is an overwhelmingly powerful statement, the more so as its overhangs make it entirely visible and comprehensible from close-up, the exact reverse of the case with most New York buildings. It is scrupulously articulated, and the main block of the museum, sheathed in black granite, is set back from neighboring buildings by recessed service stairs and high parti-walls, both of rough-finished concrete. Its massive scale, particularly apparent in the Cyclopean facade, is made bearable by the marks of the board forms on the concrete and the size and pattern of the granite revetment panels. In both of these elements, and even more in the shape and finish of the entrance bridge and in the handsome beehive-pattern bronze screen on the 75th Street fire stair, the suavity of detailing that exists throughout the building is amply apparent. So much so, indeed, that seeing the building from the corner diagonally opposite one wishes that Breuer could have designed the street light that stands out so awkwardly against it.

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The most impressive spatial experience offered by the new Whitney is the progression from street to lobby across the flying bridge that spans the sculpture moat. From the open sidewalk one first walks below an overhanging canopy which decreases slightly in height toward the building, adding to the sense of envelopment created by the side walls which enclose one just as one steps onto the bridge. A few steps further and the side and overhead portions of the bridge disappear, leaving one in a totally new space—outside, but protected by the highest overhang of the building. Again, there is an increasing rhythm of containment and enclosure as the overhangs become lower and one enters the vestibule, until finally there is release into the large laterally extended space of the lobby. The effect of this varied, positive, and carefully controlled spatial sequence is to emphasize the transition from street to museum in a ritual way not dissimilar from the preparatory function of an operatic overture. Most important, it establishes the ultimately conservative fact about the Whitney that it, unlike Wright's Guggenheim Museum or Corbusier's Carpenter Center at Harvard, is a building with an inside and an outside. The only real point of contact between inside and outside is the large window separating the inner sculpture gallery from the outside sculpture moat, and it is just here that the building is most widely open to criticism. The space of this inside-outside gallery is totally unsuited for sculpture: first, because it does not really function as one space—there is a low curb beneath the window that stops the eye from reading the two spaces as a unit; second, because of the high and narrow proportions of the two spaces, both of which extend up to the first floor ceiling and make the sculpture look as if it were in the bottom of a well; and finally, and most damaging, because the bridge is in itself such a powerful sculptural statement that it kills everything near it. When I saw it, the court-gallery contained such varied pieces as a stainless steel Smith, a Lipschitz, a Baskin, a Morris, and a large black Calder stabile, and none of them registered to anything like full effect. The Calder came off best, probably because it was not only big but painted flat black, and was placed farthest away from the bridge with the most open space above it. The entire area would be far better turned over entirely to the restaurant, which currently occupies an inadequate small space behind a brick screen on the same floor, and the sculpture much better served by being spread around the building among the paintings.

Apart from the sculpture court, the Whitney offers little at which to cavil. The pattern of light fixtures in the lobby is, as some critics have observed, unnecessarily busy, but their proliferation helps maintain human scale, and their pattern of incandescent light gives pleasant warmth to a vast room of granite and concrete. The lobby circulation leaves something to be desired, both the entrance to the collections and the stairway to the lower level being restricted, but this is at least

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partially dictated by the total area Breuer had to work with, and is certainly magnified by the size of the opening week crowds. Finally, the small gallery on the lobby floor is almost useless for most exhibitions because of its size and remoteness from the rest of the exhibition area, but it would serve well for recent accessions or the installation of single large works.

On the upper three floors—the major exhibition areas—Breuer has fulfilled every curator's dream by remaining as discreetly anonymous as is possible for a major architectural talent. He has created three huge undivided spaces and a system of movable walls to divide them as anyone installing a show may wish. These are finished in white plaster, with a ceiling grid of concrete concealing the services and providing attachment for lighting and movable walls, and floors of granite. Breuer has varied the ceiling heights, allowing for oversize painting and sculpture on the third floor, and has used wooden floors on part of the second floor so that the museum may be used for dances and other non-exhibition functions. On the fourth and second floors, he has provided low carpeted galleries, those on the fourth floor being finished in textured plaster and those on the second in wood panelling. These not only provide spatial variation, but are occupied by comfortable furniture and make pleasant resting places. In their generous use of space, they are a vast improvement over the tiny lounge in the Whitney's old 54th Street quarters. The sense of warmth and containment, which helps establish a definite rapport between the viewer and the objects exhibited, reminding one of the atmosphere in Kahn's Yale Art Gallery, is enhanced by the windows set at angles into the walls, which offer glimpses of the outside but, because of their irregular shape and deep reveals, do not bring the outdoors distractingly in. In general the interior spaces, in so far as they have been shaped by Breuer, are wonderfully warm, with a certain number of nooks and crannies and interesting variations in lighting, scale, and materials, and are flattering to the works of art, with the sole exception of a Calder mobile which is difficult to make out against the ceiling grid.

Because Breuer has deferred to the works and the people who install them in his major galleries, the interior architecture can in many senses be said to be the creation of the museum's curators rather than of the architect himself. Certainly the spaces, which are a major part of interior architecture, are their creation, and in discussing the building it is necessary to discuss the installation as part of the architecture. It is an unhappy task. With unerring lack of taste, the new building has been made to look precisely like the old one—dull—and the complete flexibility of the space has been ignored in favor of the creation of a series of rooms. Stepping from the elevator into the fourth floor, one has a sudden moment of *déjà vu* as one feels one is twenty blocks downtown. The narrow lateral space immediately in front of the elevators opens into a boxlike room, which in turn opens into side rooms at the

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far and near ends. 54th Street revisited. Furthermore, the pictures and sculpture have been placed with a total lack of regard for their visual properties. One's first view of the fourth floor is of Pollock's fine "Lavender Mist" behind David Smith's reddish, open "Hudson River Landscape"—an impossibly tangled combination of forms that kills both pieces. Morris Louis' "Tet," which should be seen as nearly at eye-level as possible, is hung far too high, as are many paintings, and the heights of surrounding works are varied with no apparent reason. Kenneth Noland's huge diamond, which also demands to be seen at eye-level, is hung with its bottom point seven feet off the floor, on the same wall with works by Cornell, Albers, Tobey, and Hopper. It would take a long, hard search to find five works that had less to do with each other. Certainly neither Andrew Wyeth nor Al Held can be very happy at the proximity of their paintings. Nor are the lateral galleries used to any advantage. These galleries, so much more intimate in feeling, are perfect for works smaller in scale, but there has been no consistent attempt to use them for that purpose. Sometimes works smaller in size have been placed there, but visual scale seems never to have been considered.

On the second and third floors, where eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works are exhibited, the hanging is just as capricious. Whistler's "Lady of the Lange Lijsen" is hung higher than is justified by anything in the picture—so high that the lights glare on it when it is seen close-to. A wall with several Homers is too crowded at the ends and too open in the middle. And no attempt has been made to show the paintings against different-colored or darker backgrounds, which would be flattering to the nineteenth-century works with their more mixed and sombre colors, and a great help to the eighteenth-century paintings, whose openwork frames sometimes stand out against the white at the expense of the pictures. Granted that the opening exhibition has too many items to be comfortably hung in the space available, it could still have been made to look far better than it does. Given a first-rate building which is also a superb addition to the New York streets, totally flexible interior space, and a magnificent exhibition of American paintings, the Whitney staff has, I fear, made the least of it. But Breuer's building, so superbly functional as a museum, remains for a more imaginative future.

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LUCY R. LIPPARD

After a Fashion—
The Group Show

AFTER INNOVATION—THE CRITICAL DELUGE; after the deluge—fashion; after fashion—the group show; after the group show (and its coverage by mass media)—criticism of criticism. These episodes replace each other rapidly on the art scene today, crowding good and bad art alike off the stage in preparation for the next act. We are now in the last phase of reaction to the current rejective, or minimal, styles. By the last phase, I do not mean that such styles are finished, but that they can soon settle into the relative calm after the museumistic storm; major artists continue to innovate within their innovation and others line up for a new chorus. In 1966-67, non-sculptural structures and structural, or "systemic," painting will be much in the public eye. This is the fourth season that primary structures have been visible in the galleries, at least the eighth that the styles now dubbed Systemic have been around. The former were sanctified in the spring at the Jewish Museum and the latter just now at the Guggenheim.

At the beginning of every season, not only museums but galleries get the synthesizing group show fever, introducing novelties or recalling the triumphs of the previous season. A small but ambitious exhibition at the Dwan Gallery, largely organized by the artists themselves and called simply *Ten,* attempted to establish an "absolute" standard of rejective paintings and structures hitherto blurred by institutional mistakes; it did not succeed, but it did assemble works of high quality, marred by an occasional inclusion or exclusion. Lawrence Alloway's *Systemic Painting,* a bigger show, presents a broader target. Like Kynaston McShine's *Primary Structures,* it was a worthy project and included good work, but suffered from a confusion of styles and quality. In addition, such collections always suffer from their limitation to a single piece by each person. They would be better off with at least two works by a more discriminate choice of artists.

My dissatisfaction with the Guggenheim exhibition was based on the premise on which it was organized as well as the selection's qualitative unevenness and the inexplicable omission of all West Coast artists (Davis, Kauffman, Irwin, Pettet, Wheeler, Makanna, for a starter). It presented neither a frankly heterogeneous group noting various directions and suggesting new affinities, nor a strictly homogeneous group noting approaches to a shared preoccupation. Very different works were massed under a common label, which implied a common theme

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and inspired the false assumption that all these artists do have something in common. *Systemic Painting* included at least three major directions, often opposed to each other, and still other overlapping minor directions, and the catalogue preface concentrated on historical events and critical intramuralism preceding all of these.

The first division would be "hard-edge" painting (Smith, Kelly, Huot, Fleming *et al.*), a term applied to a broad area of geometric or free-form painting with a certain ambiguity between figure and ground, one or few images, two or three bright colors, and a crisp execution. (This area and its "concrete expressionist" counterpart could have been eliminated without detriment to the show as a unity or a proposition.) The second division would be structural or "primary" painting, also represented at Dwan. It has no image and is often near monotonal, or modular (based on an identical repeated unit), either colorless (Martin, Ryman, Lee) or very subtly and minutely colored (Baer, Mangold, Humphrey, Novros, Barry, Gourfain). The third is a recent offshoot of hard-edge that reintroduces bright, garish color and is fundamentally opposed to structural styles. Whereas hard-edge painting is flat and often single-imaged, and structural painting is flat and all-over, this third strain deals with a new sort of illusionism that superficially contradicts the mainstream tendency of modern painting to assert its native two-dimensionality. The vehicle is often the shaped canvas (thirteen out of twenty-eight of the Systemic painters worked with non-rectangular, or multiple canvases, and others combined more than one panel into a single rectangle).

Eccentric effects derived from high-powered color and the shaped format provide an outlet from the increasingly more demanding rejective styles. Several painters, notably Neil Williams, have been working in a similar vein for some time, but only Frank Stella has really made something of it. Ironically a major influence on his peers in the formation of a structural painting, last year Stella moved into a style that entirely denies monochromatic and symmetrical principles. His newest works take the shaped canvas into a complex and ambiguous area of perverse perspectives. Often disappointing, often brilliant, they seem to be part of a "transitional period," though Stella is conceptually strong enough to carry it off despite uncertainties. The effect rests on the paradoxical juxtaposition of an angled vanishing point against a flat, surface-asserting color and treatment. As soon as the eye has established a flat plane as constant, it is forced to conceive of schematic depth, and vice versa. Stella's outer shapes do not conform to the painted scheme; Larry Zox's angular slices displace regular pattern and insinuate depth where none is allowed; Williams neutralizes a symmetrical contour by equalizing color effects.

The result is a new kind of *trompe l'oeil* that has its cake and eats it too; it might also be seen as a parody of the straight-laced formalism that allows itself no ambiguities. Sometimes this formalism looks as

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though it is parodying itself, as in Kenneth Noland's or Edwin Ruda's diamonds which are so hyper-formally attenuated that they almost meet Dada and Surrealism—the opposite pole. In this sense the perverse illusionists are related to pop art, which indirectly contributed a surprising amount to abstract art in the way of new materials, colors, surfaces, attitudes. This is apparent in such paintings as Nicholas Krushenick's abstract "Tel Aviv Hippy," its harsh line and color recalling comic book style, and in the nubbly pink plastic and rhinestone "Jayne"—a six-canvas work by Al Brunelle with a cleavage reference in the superposed triangle. The pop tinge is less apparent in the lush color of Tadaaki Kuwayama's pink and blue and silver stripping, or David Novros' metallic cut-out canvases, still less so in Robert Mangold's nearly monotonal "Gray-Orange Curved Area," which counters a tangibly hard wood surface with a soft, atmospheric blush of color rising from an asymmetrically curved bottom edge.

The Dwan exhibition has been called, jokingly, an "anti-Stella show," its absolute containment being opposed to the kind of idiosyncratic space for which Stella rejected the rejective. This is an indication of Stella's importance to the whole tendency and of the mixed feelings his subsequent delinquency has aroused, though it should have been obvious all along that despite his statements, he was always disposed to a non-mechanical and off-beat approach. The prime prototype for the rejective vein is Ad Reinhardt, whose unequivocal art-for-art's-sake stand and elimination of all but the square, trisected canvas made up of three imperceptibly different blacks, predicted current trends to a great degree. His black painting at Dwan, one of an "ultimate" series begun in 1960, was visible to only the most attentive eye as more than a solid surface. In its apparent blankness, it stood aloof from the rest of the exhibits, demanding still more esthetically open eyes and minds than the most deadpan of its companions. Its essence is not form, nor the evocative qualities of blackness, but a pervasive black light that is steadily, dully luminous, firmly anchored to the all but invisible cross, or trisection, that gives the surface a necessary structure and keeps it from being just a black relief. Reinhardt's influence on the younger artists shown here, or rather the lack of it, has yet to be fully investigated, though it is no coincidence that Stella's early works were symmetrical, black, even at times cross-shaped ("Die Fahne Hoch"), or that he owns two Reinhardts. The Reinhardt retrospective at the Jewish Museum should cause adjustment of historical schemes that minimize his contributions over the last twenty years.

There was almost no color in the Dwan show, the work being limited to severe black, white, grey, grey metals and white light, except for the very narrow borders of blue-green and green-blue on Jo Baer's "blank" double canvas. Yet there was a great deal of variety, disproving the notion that all rejective art devolves to the same end point. Here was the real, preconceived, "systemic" group. Don Judd's piece consisted of a

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row of six identical galvanized boxes projecting over three feet from the wall. Its magnificent inertia may not seem rebellious, but it is in fact a statement of opposition to the cleanly, easy-to-like attractiveness provided by so much current art (witness the Guggenheim show). Judd's refusal to relate parts to parts hierarchically, his stolid repetition, is both logical (because it looks implacably "correct" and because straight lines and even numbers give the impression of logic) and illogical (because its impressiveness is way out of proportion to its simplicity and because it is just *there,* filling space). Why should six metal boxes make any demand on our sensibilities? They are well-made but not perfect, not smoothly or sensuously surfaced; they are calming, even numbing. Yet they have a candour, exactitude, visual coherence and conceptual complexity that are as esthetically satisfying as the most elaborately ingratiating object.

Wholeness, in a box-like or modular structure, or in a painting that looks "empty" like Jo Baer's serenely challenging surfaces, does not preclude complexity or inventiveness. It is a common mistake to assume that simple equals simplistic. On the contrary, there is "complicated art"—intricately detailed, colored, dotted with chance and associative elements—which is far more simplistic, in the sense of witless acceptance of any extraneous materials and experiences. The ideal here is the factual, the specific, because the general has been equated with the romantic, the vague, the confused, in short with expressionism—a genre totally out of favor since the quasi-emotional debacles made spuriously in its name in the late fifties. Sol LeWitt's white painted cube framework resting in a larger square framework does not have the volume of the Judd, but it is spatially self-sufficient in the same manner. It does not reach out into or activate space, but holds its own, despite its openness not encompassing the room so much as rejecting all but its own dimensions. Dan Flavin's four-tube fluorescent fixture (daylight and cool) also restrains its glow to exceed only slightly its dimensions. Carl Andre's unassuming floor plaque of one half inch high slate-colored magnets is as intentionally non-physical as Robert Morris' bulky four foot high grey plywood box is intentionally obstructive. Agnes Martin's delicately inflected, regularly conceived grid painting has mystical overtones, and like Robert Smithson's neo-plastic baroque stepped relief and Michael Steiner's crenellated stainless steel piece, stands somewhat outside of the show's claims to an absolute proposition.

The intellectual rigor and detachment of rejective art (a term I prefer to "minimal" or "reductive" because it does not imply attrition) is a source of annoyance to more conservative, or less singly involved critics, because the great personal commitment of these artists is a commitment to making visual objects, rather than to humanism. In the "Systemic" catalogue, Lawrence Alloway asserts the need for critics to reintroduce "other experience" into their appraisals of an art steadfastly opposed

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to personal interpretation, and Hilton Kramer has concluded that Systemic Painting is "an art for critics . . . derived mainly from an analysis of critical theory. Their physical and visual realization offers us not the intervention of a sensibility so much as the technical implementation of a theoretical possibility. The very use of a 'system' suggests a flight from sensibility, a conscious evasion of 'other experience.' " He is right about the conscious evasion, but that is in itself indicative of a sensibility little understood by those who simply don't react to this kind of work. With all due respect to Mr. Kramer's opinions, there is no reason why critical commitment to an art should detract from that art, or in any way suggest that the art derives from the criticism. As a matter of fact, most of the artists in the Systemic show do not agree with each other, or with "their" critics, on theoretical or emotional grounds, as is proved by the statements in the catalogue.

The main issue is: why should critical commitment be interpreted as critical dominance? One reason is the intellectual quality of rejective art; another may be the fact that there has been little American art criticism of note over the last twenty years. As a result, the few good critics (particularly the only author of a sustained critical theory—Clement Greenberg) have been over-appreciated. There is no question that one of the problems facing the young or so-called "new critics" today is, as Mr. Alloway observes, a revaluation and adjustment (not a devaluation) of Mr. Greenberg's notion of the history of American painting for the last twenty years. Yet even Mr. Greenberg owes the basis of his theories to his acquaintance with the artists themselves and his knowledge of their intentions, problems, and solutions. Given the circumstances of the New York art world today, and the art "world" in many senses *is* New York, it would be most unnatural for critics not to know any artists; those of the same generation are all the more likely to coincide in their viewpoints. The idea that the critic should have nothing in common with the artist is one promulgated by art historians more accustomed to dealing with artists who have been dead for some time. A great majority of the fundamental ideas presented by the new critics comes from the artists, from their works and from constant dialogues. If the critics spend more time classifying, analyzing, justifying these ideas than the painters whose task is to provide them in visual form, that is not a matter of exerting influence. The best contemporary literature on the Cubists, for example, was produced by friends of the artists, though needless to say all the friends did not have valid contributions to make. All major critics have been partisan. Esthetic experience can only be so objective. It should hardly be surprising that the more esthetically attracted one is to a work or type of work the more one seeks to explore, hopefully not to rationalize, this attraction. Without some strong commitment, criticism becomes the pedantic, review-oriented, nit-picking, wage-earning esoterica to which book and art reviewers often succumb.

The new criticism is opposed to the "review syndrome" that has

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plagued contemporary art writing with minutiae, poetry, fanciful journalism, social commentary and explanations based on a vague premise of *Zeitgeist*. It is founded on the experience of looking at art objects and thinking about their achievements and effects. Ideally the conclusions drawn are readable, but not necessarily easy to read. Like the art it takes its lead from, much recent criticism does not aim to entertain or explain. Yet it is a sad commentary on criticism, and its reception outside the confines of the art world, that serious and frequently scholarly commitment to the idioms of the present is suspiciously interpreted as commercialism, chic, partisanship, academism or an exercise in boredom. My digression on criticism may be outside the scope of an art chronicle, and can be interpreted as still more critical intramuralism. Yet one of the most depressing facts about writing art criticism today is the extremely limited audience. Artists don't need it, the general public is too lazy, and knowledge of the contemporary visual arts among the so-called intelligentsia, the readers of quarterlies everywhere, is abysmally non-existent. There is no reason why art should be considered outside the intellectual domain. If a certain knowledge of recent theatre, fiction, film, opera, music are considered de rigueur for a cultivated person, why shouldn't it also be necessary to know the recent history and major literature of painting? Yet museums and galleries are visited for vaguely culture-seeking motives or not at all. The art world is no more insular than any other cultural subculture, probably less so, since there is no language barrier. Supposedly all the arts are experienced for esthetic pleasure and discussed in print for intellectual pleasure, or at least enlightenment. Yet serious art criticism can not depend on any outside readership, no matter how "cultivated," to know even the most basic names, facts or categories involved.

By its very restrictiveness, rejective art opens new areas of esthetic experience. It even tends to be overstimulating. Above all, it has to be looked at. It will not provide instant departures for the familiar picture-finding, landscape-spotting, memory-inducing that often passes for enjoyment of abstract art. Like a sky or a large body of water, one of Reinhardt's black paintings, for example, must be seen whole, as itself, without crutches of associative relationship to other objects or sights. So many viewers are lost without this crutch that the new art is often called "boring" or, at the other extreme, it is said to "test the spectator's commitment." The fact is that the process of conquering boredom that makes the pleasure of art fully accessible is a time-consuming one. Most people prefer to stay with boredom, though it does seem, in view of the deluge of recently published comment about boredom in the arts, to be a pretty fascinating boredom. It is ironical that Harold Rosenberg should be one of the most vociferous detractors of "artistic boredom" for, despite his poetic and social insights, he is well known for his frequent inaccuracies of visual observation, his lack of interest in really *looking* at anything.

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The exclusion of "lyricism, humanity, and warmth of expression" horrifies Mr. Rosenberg (writing in *Vogue*). Yet do we really turn to painting and sculpture for any of these qualities? Is there any reason why the rarefied atmosphere of esthetic pleasure should be obscured by everyday emotional and associative obsessions, by definite pasts, presents and futures, by "human" experience? Humanist content and the need for humanist content in the visual arts in this century is rapidly diminishing; at the moment it rests with photography, film, and the stagnation of figurative art. A painting that is asked to be both a painting and a picture of something else that has nothing to do with painting per se is likely to suffer from its contradictory roles. Visual art is visual. Abstract art objects are made to be seen and not heard, touched, read, entered, interpreted. The expansion of the visual media into other areas has produced many effective results, but they have increasingly less to do with visual art and more to do with a new art of fusion.

Thus the issue of introducing "other experience" into art is, in the context of rejective styles, and for better or for worse, irrelevant. Literature, as a verbal medium, demands a verbal response. But advanced music has not been asked to explain itself symbolically or humanistically for years. Why should painting and sculpture still be scapegoats?

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

ALBEE IS PROGRESSING. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was about the emptiness that surrounds and threatens to swallow our relationships; *Tiny Alice* was about the void lurking behind our deepest beliefs; now, *A Delicate Balance* is about the nothingness, the bare nothingness of it all—it is a play about nothing. Nothing will come of nothing was not spoken of the theatre: *there* nothing has been known to yield glittering and even golden returns. *Heartbreak House,* for example, is a play more or less about nothing, and so are most of Beckett's plays. But Shaw fills his nothingness with incisive speculation, so that the mind, though working in a near-vacuum, begets its own thrilling parabolas; Beckett raises nothingness to fierce tragicomic, almost epic, heights. But the nothingness—perhaps more accurately *nothinginess*—of Albee's play is petty, self-indulgent, stationary. Albee's nothing is as dull as anything.

Tobias and Agnes, a genteel, middle-aged couple, are the pillars of suburbia. They drink, vegetate, and speechify. With them lives Agnes's alcoholic younger sister, Claire, between whom and Tobias there may or may not be some hanky-panky. Claire and Agnes loathe each other, which allows Claire to pour out a steady stream of wisecracks floating out over the stream of liquor flowing down. The daughter of the house, Julia, aged 36, returns as her fourth marriage is breaking up; this phenomenon occurs every three years, and her parents keep her room ready to soothe the post-marital depression. This uneasy ménage could just barely be kept in a delicate balance if it weren't for the neighbors and best friends, Harry and Edna, who, sudden preys to a terrible but nameless fear, arrive unannounced and intending to stay, apparently, forever. They are given Julia's room, which causes that ungay divorcee to have hysterics and almost shoot the intruders. After much soul-searching and several storms in a martini glass, leading up to a frenzied tirade of Tobias's full of instant self-contradiction, Harry and Edna go home, after all, leaving the family quartet to play, in precarious equilibrium, sour-sweet music on one another's heartstrings.

The first thing to strike one about all this is its rank improbability. Why are any of these people here? Why should Agnes tolerate Claire's sniping, and why would Claire want this ungenial hostess, even with free drinks and the rather square host thrown in as an ice cube? Why should Julia rush home to recuperate, when she and her parents do not seem particularly in tune, and she is wealthy and big enough to undertake a hotel? Why should the neighbors wish to move in? Edna was at her knitting, Harry at his recorded French course, when the mysterious terror seized them. But what makes them think that they

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can move in with their friends indefinitely, or, rather, definitively? And why; when in that vacuous household, amid jangling cocktail glasses and nerves, there is plenty of room for the fear to move right in with them? Finally, the key problem makes no sense: should one put up one's neighbors, in the name of friendship, in perpetuity, or shouldn't one? No halfway sane people would arrive with such a request, and no halfway conceivable people would seriously entertain the notion of so entertaining them. Yet in Albee's play this is presented with a straight face, earnestly, though the idea belongs in absurdist farce, where, however, it would be handled with Ionescoan wit or Pinterish balefulness.

But, presumably, there is a deeper meaning: something, no doubt, like what is a marriage, a family, friendship, and how does one keep these relations going in the face of a world grown meaningless. Now, first of all, I am tired of this mythical "meaningless world" when the playwright fails to create or suggest any outer world (one isolated reference to income taxes might as well have been to Chinese calligraphy), and when he neglects to indicate what meaningfulness might have been before it got mislaid. This posturing play abounds in the cocktail-party profundities and family-reunion soundings that bloated up Eliot's drama, but at least Eliot was, however flatfootedly, after some sort of myth or metaphysic. Albee, too, must drop little hints: one can play with Claire's clairvoyance, with Julia as a latter-day Juliet, with Tobias and Agnes as Tobias and the Angel—but, as Elizabeth Hardwick notes, "a reading of the *Book of Tobit* did not produce any deepening allegory."

That may still leave Albee's language, which, according to a chorus of reviewers, is a marvel and a joy. Now, it is true that Albee is in love with language, which sets him above your average playwright who does not even realize that language exists, but, for all that, Albee's love affair is sadly one-sided. The language of *Virginia Woolf,* for example, often lapses into subliteracy: "He is breathing a little heavy; behaving a little manic," "A son who I have raised," "I have never robbed a hothouse without there is a light from heaven," the curious notion that *ibid* means something like "in the same way," which frequently recurs in the stage directions, e.g., "NICK (*very quietly*) . . . GEORGE (*ibid*)" etc. etc. In my review of *Tiny Alice,* I quoted a goodly number of similar lapses, and, mind you, always in the speech of supposedly cultivated persons. So again here, as in "You're not as young as either of us were," or in Claire's dogged distinction that she is not "an alcoholic" but "*a* alcoholic," which is supposed to be amusingly portentous, but manages to be merely nonsense, linguistically and otherwise.

But there is a much more profound insensitivity to language at work here, and the more painful since Albee (as he did in *Tiny Alice*) has one of his characters apologize for his alleged articulateness. But

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Albee's "articulateness" is either self-conscious poeticism, "When the daylight comes, comes order with it," or long, syntactically overburdened sentences and paragraphs, or putative shockers like, "Your mummy got her pudenda scarred a couple of times before she met daddy," where "pudenda" is rather too recherché for Tobias, and "scarred" much too sadistic: it may be consistent with his character to be sardonic, but not to be beastly. Or, again, consider, "And if we were touching, ah, what a splendid cocoon that was!" How inept to use the weak word "touching" for sexual contact (as it is here used) and to match this up with "cocoon," which does not suggest two beings becoming one, but, on the contrary, one ego narcissistically shutting itself off. Or take this exchange: "You are not young, and you do not live at home.—Where do I live?—In the dark sadness, yes?" Is this supposed to be irony or lyricism? In either case, I say, the dark sadness, no. And even Albee's usually dependable bitchy wit fails him all too often here, as in "AGNES: Why don't you go to Kentucky or Tennessee and visit the distilleries? CLAIRE: Why don't you die?"

What, one wonders, was the real motive behind *A Delicate Balance*? I, for one, still believe in Albee's perceptiveness and even in his talent (he did, after all, write *The Zoo Story* and *Virginia Woolf*); why would he hurtle into such utter pointlessness? It occurs to me that at least since *Virginia Woolf*, Albee's plays and adaptations have been viewed by many as dealing overtly or covertly with homosexual matters; Albee may have resolved here to write a play reeking with heterosexuality. To be sure, the edges are fuzzy. The good friends Harry and Tobias spend a summer sleeping with the same girl, a practice about which psychoanalysis has a thing or two to tell. When an unprepossessing and gauche saleswoman tries to help Claire with a bathing suit and asks her what she could do for her, Claire replies with a nasty smirk fraught with *double entendre*, "Not very much, sweetheart," a piece of repartee appropriate only to an invert. And there is a whole sequence in which Agnes and Tobias figuratively (and sneeringly) reverse sexes and roles in their relationship with Julia. But all this is not at the heart of the play. At the heart of the play things are heterosexual and totally lifeless.

Under the circumstances, it is hard to evaluate the production. It would seem that Rosemary Murphy, as Claire, gives the best performance, but, then, she gets most of the good lines and few of the terrible ones; it would also seem that the others act passably, except for Marian Seldes whose Julia is unconvincing, and Carmen Mathews who makes Edna so smug and odious that no one, I should think, would let her cross his threshold. Alan Schneider's direction may be all that can be done for the play, and William Ritman's set has the proper look of an expensive, well-furnished cavern, to match the general hollowness. Liquors are by Renfield Importers, Ltd., and without them the play might be close to an act shorter.

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Peter Weiss's *The Investigation* is, for quite other reasons, not a play either. It is an abridgment of the 1964-65 Frankfurt trials of former Auschwitz personnel, which Weiss has edited but, as he maintains, not added to. It is, in other words, a theatre documentary that relates untold unspeakable horrors; shows that the men who perpetrated them still believe, most of them quite sincerely, that they were only doing their duty; and points out that those few who miraculously survived live in a world in which their former torturers and would-be executioners are, for the most part, better off than they. *The Investigation* implies that we are all only too capable of such bestialities if encouraged or ordered to commit them, and is, presumably, intended as a memento and a warning.

The play (I call it that merely for convenience) raises two liminal questions: is the stage the place for a documentary, and does this particular documentary serve a valid purpose? I am not against documentary theatre, as long as no one goes around calling its author a full-fledged dramatist. About the appropriateness of the subject—well, the Austrian humorist, Helmut Qualtinger, playing on the German title of Pirandello's masterpiece (*Sechs Personen suchen einen Autor*), quipped, "Sechs Millionen Personen suchen keinen Autor," and there is some validity in the argument that no theatrical presentation can grapple with the enormity of this crime. The argument runs that making a "play" out of it either commercializes and cheapens the event, or (more plausibly) that so many horrors cancel one another out, and that the audience ends up hardened rather than moved. There is also the corollary argument that this kind of play reaches only those already converted, and that—as the play itself demonstrates—those prone to such brutality cannot be kept from it by any easy means.

It is undeniable that *The Investigation* is not a work of art. That brings to mind Hochhuth's remarks on the fifth act of his *Deputy,* which takes place at Auschwitz. After claiming that "documentary naturalism" is an inadequate "stylistic principle" for the purpose, Hochhuth nonetheless warns that "an approach such as was so effectively used in Paul Celan's masterly poem *Todesfuge,* in which the gassing of the Jews is entirely translated into metaphors . . . despite the tremendous force of suggestion emanating from . . . metaphors still [screens] the infernal cynicism of what really took place. . . ." Since Hochhuth is right on both counts, his own last act fails, and so, on one level at least, does all of *The Investigation.*

I would like to think that the way to produce the impact that might make an impression on people is through art, though whether anything can soothe the savage breast more than fleetingly is highly debatable. Art, however, can cope only with a narrower range: it can show fear in a handful of dust, but not in ovenfuls of human ashes. Even so, I am for anything that might in any way remind us of our *maxima culpa* of not being better than we are, for anything that does

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whatever it can to deanonymize the victims of persecution. Yet it must be admitted that films can do this documentary memorialization better than the stage: I am thinking of Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog,* and, more recently, of a Hungarian short, *St. Matthew Passion* by Tamás Czigány, which, to the accompaniment of Bach's music, had the camera shuttling between paintings of the Crucifixion and actual shots from the death camps.

It would seem necessary, however, that any theatrical re-enactment be staged and acted with utmost subtlety and restraint: even outbursts should be managed with a kind of impersonality transcending the histrionic. This has proved too much for the director, Ulu Grosbard, and most of the cast. Sitting in tiers of a stylized wooden beehive, and costumed in grey (witnesses for the prosecution), charcoal (witnesses for the accused), and black (defendants), surrounded by more wood, and, indeed, revealed by the drawing apart of two halves of a heavy wood and wire wall, the performers, like the scenery by Kert Lundell, look more or less right. But as one becomes more precisely aware of them, trouble begins. Fellows like Tom Pedi and Richard Castellano, for instance, look like Brooklyn truckdrivers, and, once they open their mouths, no amount of reverse English could turn them into Teutonic torturers or symbols of universal inhumanity. Others, like Gordon B. Clarke, Ferdi Hoffman, and John Marley, though they look right, either overact, or go off on histrionic tangents. Still others, like Ward Costello or Leslie Barrett, can make powerful stuff sound garbled or dull. Henry Oliver, for example, manages everything right, except making you forget that he is an actor. The judge and the two attorneys, besides being awkwardly placed into the orchestra pit with their backs to the audience, are all ineffectual. A particularly offensive performance is given by Vivian Nathan, as a composite of various Auschwitz inmates: she literally bristles with a variety of cheap little tricks meant to extort sympathy from the audience; and even genuine tears, on her, become cultured pearls.

A few people, on the other hand, emerge commendably. Peter Brandon makes a stolid, callous Nazi corporal almost pitiable; and Wendell K. Phillips, Sr. and Ivor Francis make two lesser defendants thoroughly credible. It is significant, though, that the butchers tend to come out more substantial, more real than the victims. Still, on the other side of the fence, Alice Hirson looks and sounds right, with a lurking hysteria almost completely buried under layers of hard, petrified tissue. And as for Graham Jarvis, here was a witness in the truest sense of that word, all clarity, simplicity, penetration. His pauses were not for effect, one felt, only to find the most nearly adequate words for the inexpressible. The most horrible things were uttered most soberly. Always there was the suggestion of patience and humility before the facts, and though the lips sometimes came close to trembling, there was no quaver in the voice, no gratuitous tearfulness. Even

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while merely sitting and listening to others, Jarvis tilted his body, neck, and face into the exact angle of acute concern, and was the very image of troubled decency.

But as I look at the German text of *The Investigation,* I become troubled, too. There is something faintly disturbing (and not in the right sense) about an author who can take this material and transcribe it as free verse, call it "an oratorio in eleven cantos," and collect royalties on it.

The new Lincoln Center Repertory Company began its second season with *The Alchemist,* which is risky business for a much gunned-at management. A play whose hero is the language, the varying verbal style, the very alchemy of Jonson's words, is hardly to be recommended to a motley, linguistically uncompelling company, and for an audience that can scarcely be described as particularly cultivated. For some reason or other, *The Alchemist* does, however, crop up with clockwork regularity every few years, usually in productions that think that horseplay will do the trick. The recent production has about as much horsepower as a tin Lizzie, and makes as beautiful sounds when cranked up. There are also passages which the director, Jules Irving, has forgotten to crank up, such as the opening scene, which fills one with an anticipatory torpor it would be hard for anything to dispel.

One of the troubles with this production is that it lacks any kind of conviction. If, for example, the alchemical apparatus is to be brought on stage, a far more convoluted and ominous machine is needed than the one we get here: all that sputters is not Goldberg. The text is severely cut and mildly modernized—not always justifiably: "naked among my concubines" is no substitute for "naked among my succubae"—but what does it greater injustice is the various characters' inability to get into its spirit. Take George Voskovec's Sir Epicure Mammon. The part requires someone who can deliver Jonson's travesty of Marlovian overreaching with the properly tripping tongue; instead we get a tight, scrawny voice with a Czech accent. And instead of a grandly foolish voluptuary, Voskovec gives us someone emotionally pinched: under the noble clothes, the flesh is moth-eaten. Or take Michael O'Sullivan's Subtle. Again something larger than life is called for: someone who can make the dramatis personae as well as the persons in the audience believe the unbelievable. Instead we get this actor's usual tantrums, paroxysms, contortions of face, body, and voice —a kind of portable play-school Bedlam in which O'Sullivan permanently encases himself. And Nancy Marchand's Dol Common is blasé or scornful when she is not campy, but never lusty, never really enjoying her whorish antics. Little can be said for Ray Fry's cutie-pie Drugger or Robert Phalen's obvious Kastril; even less for Michael Granger's cloddish Surly. As for Aline MacMahon's Tribulation (a part calling for a male actor, anyway), it is merely a sad testimonial to what an extensive Broadway background avails in a classical role.

On the credit side, there was Robert Symonds as Face—so identified

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only in the list of understudies; in the dramatis personae, however, labeled Jeremy Butler. Symonds is not exactly the one-man rogue's gallery one would have liked to see; his effects always smack a bit of the midnight oil (not quite the same as the Philosopher's Elixir), but at least he gets across what needs to be conveyed. As Dapper, Lee Goodman managed to be effective without overplaying a part that easily lends itself to excess; Earl Montgomery's Ananias was more than acceptable; Elizabeth Huddle did agreeably with what was left of Dame Pliant; and Philip Bosco gave the evening's best performance as a poised and easeful Lovewit.

But everything is not only smaller than life, it is also a good deal less than art. Though the large stage is suitably reduced in size, even the remaining playing area is not filled either with sensory or with sensible delights. The scenery is only fair, the costumes less than inventive, the music undistinguished. The accents, as usual with this group, are a conglomeration or irreconcilables, the occasional attempts by Dol or Kastril to sound Cockney or countrified being particularly heartrending. As an actor friend of mine evaluated it, "O medium-rare Ben Jonson; certainly not well-done."

Dinner at Eight is a fumbling farce that makes gestures in the direction of seriousness; when Kaufman and Ferber wrote it in 1930, it may have seemed adequate commodity theatre, but now the farcical parts are unfunny and the serious parts grotesque. Why Tyrone Guthrie, who enjoys turning fine things like *Troilus and Cressida* or *Six Characters in Search of an Author* into farce, should have bothered with something so thoroughly pre-vulgarized, I cannot imagine. Perhaps the (undeserved) success last season of *You Can't Take It With You* started a trend: at this writing, Kaufman's *The Butter and Egg Man* has just been revived, and there is more to come. I sincerely hope that it will soon be discovered that the farces of the Thirties are scarcely more viable than the message dramas. (A recent City Center revival of a drama by a Thirties playwright, Odets's *The Country Girl,* supervised by Lee Strasberg and directed by his protegé Martin Fried, ranged from the insipid to the ludicrous.) In *Dinner at Eight,* a large pseudo-distinguished cast goes through Guthrie's surprisingly uninventive motions, and nothing much registers except a few painfully bad performances. Blanche Yurka as a cook, Olympian in the face of culinary catastrophe, and Walter Pidgeon, as an old-style gentleman and millionaire going down gracefully to financial and heart failure, do, however, make small dents in the general haplessness.

From England comes a farce that is not wholly dissimilar in its ambivalence, though it is wildly up-to-date. *The Killing of Sister George* concerns a beloved character on a popular BBC radio serial who is to be killed off in order to make the program more contemporary. This character, Sister George, is a hymn-singing, motor bike-riding, rough-and-ready nurse, and has become second nature to June Buckridge, the aging actress who portrays her. But June's first nature is still very

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much there, nice and unnatural: she is a tippling lesbian termagant. Her flat- and bed-mate is an infantile girl of 34, nicknamed Childie, who can be rather exasperating and mercenary—a sort of inverted, post-graduate Lolita. Into this alternatingly jovial and sinister ménage (there are violent quarrels after which Childie has to do ritual, masochistic penance) comes Mrs. Mercy Croft, an oh so politely steely executive of the BBC, bringing tidings of Sister George's fate that drip with elocutionist's honey and leave an aftertaste of pure wormwood. The play depicts the deterioration of June's and Childie's relationship as Sister George's foothold on the serial becomes more and more precarious. (A drunken assault on a pair of nuns in a taxi just outside Broadcasting House doesn't help either.) Finally, Sister George is dispatched in a traffic accident which the BBC, in its infinite wisdom, has coincide with Road Safety Week. George is mourned by the BBC on the air along with, it would seem, the entire nation. Mrs. Croft steals Childie from June, who is offered the ultimate ignominy of playing a cow on a children's serial, but, never fear, a contemporary, "a flawed, credible cow." As the curtain falls, June is drinking alone and practicing her mooing.

Now the problem with Frank Marcus's play is that it cannot find its tone. There are elements of domestic comedy cheek by jowl with absurdist farce, just as there is pathos jostling satire. Sometimes one is not even sure about what is which: thus Childie having to kneel and kiss the hem of June's dress, or eat June's cigar butt, or drink June's bath water may be the semi-jocular enactment of a fantasy, or may have to be taken more seriously as tokens of the beatings Childie claims to receive at other times. There are moments when the play functions effectively on one plane or another, but, eventually, the tug of its conflicting aspirations confuses and cheapens the issues. And though the humor, consistently on target in the first act, is still well aimed much of the time thereafter, it broadens out excessively without being able to hoist itself fully into satire or to burrow deep enough into the absurd.

The two principal performances, however, are gloriously irreproachable. In Beryl Reid's George *cum* June all of the author's complex and sometimes contradictory intentions are frighteningly, funnily, frangibly reconciled; and Eileeen Atkins's Childie is a paradigm of gawky pathos and seductively jolly bitchiness. They can be exceedingly amusing together, as when they practice a Laurel and Hardy routine for a drag party and make the fetching humor go sour and ominous at the drop of water into a hat. Indeed, they turn their whole being together into a comic routine that teeters breathlessly between tease and torment. Lally Bowers is, like her BBC accent, a trifle overstated, and Polly Rowles, as a Russian clairvoyante, can pass. Val May has directed shrewdly, and *The Killing of Sister George* emerges uneven but with quite a swarm of tickles and stings.

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Another play that is not quite fish nor fowl but definitely good red herring is Henry Livings's *Eh?,* showing with appropriate paradoxicality at the Circle in the Square. Livings belongs to that interesting group of English playwrights who, independently from one another, experiment with the crossbreeding of the crudely vernacular with the poetically absurd. In *Eh?,* a doltish yet vaguely scary mod, Valentine Brose, obtains under peculiar circumstances a nebulous job as button-pusher in the boiler room of an Orwellian dye works run along lines that are sinisterly solicitous. He moves in illegally with his truculent girl friend and a culture of nine-inch mushrooms, and proceeds to bollox up the works. Revolving around him are a blustering shop steward, an Oriental mystic of a stoker, a frustrated female staff psychologist, and a smarmy parson who heads the anti-smoke committee. Between the monstrous boilers making megalomaniacal noises and the messianic mushrooms abetting metaphysical entropy, between the oily hectoring of the P. A. system reducing the factory to a hotbed of wholesome clichés and the fuzzy anarchy practiced with confident lunacy by Brose, the play lurches from cybernetics to psychedelics through dialogue that is mostly platitudes stood on their empty heads. "It takes a great deal of understanding to understand that you are quite understanding." "Don't push it: whatever occurs to you, do the opposite.—What if the opposite occurs to me?" "I think I have a series of withdrawal symptoms . . . Shan't be a minute." And so on.

The trouble with *Eh?* is that its comic invention often runs out of steam and that its intentions shuttle from overobscure to overobvious. Almost all the performers are at least likable, though the various British accents, indispensable to this play, are either missing or garbled. There is no doubt that Dustin Hoffman, whose Brose is sheer crazy brose-poetry, is one of our liveliest comic demolitionists, and the gifted Alan Arkin (of whom Hoffman's technique sometimes reminds me) took over the directorial reins just in time—though I detect an occasional ponderousness that is Arkin's nemesis. *Eh?* dawdles, flounders, fizzles, but its zestful irreverence bears some juicily bittersweet fruit. How can one not sympathize with the shop steward's lament before his super-boiler: "Look at it! It is a miracle of engineering. You could burn wet sacks in it without producing black smoke. When will someone invent me a man?"

The American Place Theatre started its season with *Who's Got His Own,* the work of a Negro playwright, Ronald Milner. In it, a Negro family are unremittingly at one another's throats, screaming and clawing from the first moment, and it takes ten minutes of dreary dialogue (very poorly enunciated) to determine whether Sister will leave the room while Brother makes a searing revelation, or whether Brother will leave while Sister makes it. I decided there and then to leave the room myself, wondering why the playwright chose his awkward title instead of something more resounding and apt, say, "Look Black in Anger."

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The Apple Tree is a musical whose originality consists in being based on three unconnected stories by Mark Twain, Frank R. Stockton and Jules Feiffer, but which is otherwise conventional Broadway fare. The first, Twainian act takes place in the Garden of Eden and, thereafter, the adjoining Vale of Tears; the second, Stocktonian act is laid in Never-Never Land between the two doors concealing, respectively, a stuffed tiger and a stacked chorine; and the third takes place in Feiffer country where waifs turn into movie stars and Joe Blows into Bob Dylans and back again, and the point, if any, is what's the difference, nobody is perfect. Some attempt is made to pull this diverse material together; it remains resolutely disparate, though that hardly matters. The Twain part is moderately funny until it goes sentimental; the Stockton part is rank varsity follies; and the Feiffer, although none of it strikes one as particularly new, pleasant tomfoolery. Sheldon Harnick and Jerry Bock have not overexerted themselves with the words and music (though the "Who Is She?" number is lifted bodily from *Lady in the Dark*), and the same pair, along with Jerome Coopersmith, have done even less with the book. But Mike Nichols, the director, and some other tried and tricky hands have added their several kinds of smoothness to the proceedings. What makes the occasion more than a routine ramble through the domains of pseudo-sophistication is the presence of Barbara Harris and Alan Alda. These two make the most scrupulously perfected comic technique seem as easy as idle doodling, for theirs is a great mastery of that staggering unspontaneous spontaneity also called art.

And now I want to tell you about what was, for me, the most thought-provoking event of the season so far. It happened at the opening night of three one-acters by Thornton Wilder (nothing thought-provoking about them!), the first production of the year. Here was an audience of double first-nighters: the first night of the first play; surely these were true sophisticates. Well, when the curtain went up on the third playlet, the nauseatingly *Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden,* it revealed a bare stage with a few folding chairs and, of course, the blank brick wall at the back of the stage. This sight was greeted with enthusiastic applause.

Now let us reflect on what this might mean. Was the audience made up of such profound seekers after truth, that genuine bricks in a genuine wall were more welcome and precious to them than any scenery the talented Ed Wittstein might have devised? Or did the audience consist of such simpletons as mistake a piece of building construction for ingenious *trompe-l'oeil* scenery and then give vent to their passion for *verismo?* Or could our first-nighters, even the more advanced, off-Broadway kind, be utter imbeciles who think that every set must be applauded—even if the emperor isn't wearing any—because it proves one's appreciation of Art? Ponder this one, dear readers, for here might lie the answer to certain vexing, ecumenical puzzlers.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

THE GUARNERI QUARTET, IN ITS SERIES OF FIVE CONCERTS in Sanders Theater, Cambridge, last summer, played even more impressively than the summer before, and demonstrated that it was now the ranking string quartet in this country. The tonal beauty, the sensitive inflection, the integrated progesssion of the four strands of the texture, the musical understanding and taste operating in that progression—these produced realizations of Beethoven's last five quartets such as haven't been heard since the days of the New Music Quartet, and superb performances also of the unfamiliar little Quartet K. 168 of Mozart and the great Op. 20 No. 4 of Haydn. Each concert offered a modern or contemporary work: Webern's *Fünf Sätze* Op. 5 (1909), whose fragmentary sounds lost out in the competition with the noise that came through the open windows; Schönberg's Quartet No. 2 (1907), whose coarser writing could be heard, but conveyed nothing to me; Stravinsky's Concertino (1920), which I found as unattractive this time as when it was first played in New York by the Flonzaley Quartet; Leon Kirchner's Quartet No. 2 (1958), whose empty discordant ranting seemed as bad as anyone could contrive, until Roger Sessions' Second Quartet (1950) demonstrated at interminable and excruciatingly hideous length to what extremes sheer will could drive lack of creative ability.

The youth of three of the Guarneri group made it inevitable that some critics whose criticism is an operation of one-upmanship would use the immaturity ploy that is so plausible and so profitable; and the first to do so was the critic of *The Boston Globe,* Michael Steinberg. He had done it with the pianist Ashkenazy; and with the Guarneri Quartet even before the Sanders Theater series, in his review of its recording of two Mozart quartets, in which its immaturity had been evident to him in its failure to vary repetitions and recurrences—for example, the repetitions of the two minuets. This was an example not merely of what can be called Steinberg's habitual knowledge-dropping, but of his dropping of knowledge that isn't applicable to the situation. A specialist I asked confirmed my impression that a keyboard performer playing a piece by Couperin was expected to vary his execution of the ornaments in a repetition of a section, and a singer of one of Handel's *da capo* arias was expected to add embellishments in her repetition of the first part, but that this was not expected in the performance of a Mozart symphony or quartet, in which all the notes were written out and the layout of dynamics in performance was specified; and the direction to repeat the minuet after the trio was a direction to play it again as written, i.e., with the same specified layout of dynamics

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as the first time. The unvaried repetition of the minuets was no more a sign of immaturity in the Guarneri Quartet than it was in the Budapest Quartet or the countless others who have done the same thing.

The evidence that the Guarneri's playing of late Beethoven was "not yet matured" included their missing—for Steinberg's ears—"the implied 'attaca' between Cavatina and finale in Op. 130," and their similar missing of the transition between the first and second movements of Op. 131 and the transition from the Scherzo to the Adagio of that quartet. None of these were "missed" for my ears or for the ears of some other musically experienced listeners who heard the performances: but if we had thought they *had* been missed, we wouldn't have dreamed of taking such slight miscalculations of a particular occasion—in performances so impressively mature throughout—as indications of the Guarneri's playing of late Beethoven being "not yet matured." So with the other defects of the same magnitude that were audible to the Steinberg ear but not to mine or to the ears of others.

Further musical experiences of the summer, provided by broadcasts from Tanglewood, included a notable performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto K.503 by Claude Frank and the Boston Symphony under Leinsdorf, in which Frank made the solo part exciting with the clarity and strength of articulation and the continuity of outline and tension of his playing; a performance of Mozart's Concerto K.450 with the slack, prettified playing of Malcolm Frager; and a performance of Chopin's Concerto No. 2 with lovely playing by Lillian Kallir. I listened also to the American winners in this year's Moscow competition: the soprano Jane Marsh, with an agreeable voice of moderate power, but without the expressive intensity required by Tatiana's long solo in *Eugene Onegin* and *"O patria mia"* from *Aida;* the soprano Veronica Tyler, whose pleasant but slightly tremulous voice went through *"Et incarnatus est"* from Mozart's Mass in C minor in characterless fashion; and the bass Simon Estes, who used a fine voice with expressive effect in Philip's monologue from *Don Carlo.*

My first opera of the fall was *La Traviata*—not the Metropolitan's new production or that of the New York City Opera, but a routine performance by the Brooklyn Opera Company in the Brooklyn Academy of Music. My reason for going was not the singing, which was good enough to please the audience, but the conducting of a young man named Vincent La Selva. I reported here a few years ago the remarkable technical and musical authority of his conducting of a small group of singers and players in Verdi operas in a parochial school in lower Manhattan; and he operated even more impressively with the more adequate forces of the performance in Brooklyn. It is clear that he has what Bernard Shaw described as the highest faculty of a conductor, namely the "magnetic influence under which an orchestra becomes as amenable to the baton as a pianoforte to the fingers"—and not only an orchestra but singers. And he operates, in a performance of opera, very much as Toscanini did, creating first, with the move-

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ments of his stick, a basic orchestral shape, into which those movements of his stick further impel the singers to fit their phrases. Moreover, the molding of the shape is done, like Toscanini's, with the idiomatic *espansione* of the Verdi style within the limits of plastic coherence and good taste, and produced in *La Traviata* a third-act concluding ensemble of Toscanini-like power.

My next opera was the production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* designed and directed by Beni Montresor for the New York City Opera. Montresor's idiosyncratic style is as perfectly suited to the fantastic world of *The Magic Flute* as Eugene Berman's is to the grand one of *Don Giovanni;* and the scenery and costumes he designed (except for the pink costume of Pamina which clashes with the subtle colors of everything else) take their place with those of Berman's *Don Giovanni* as the most overwhelmingly beautiful and most effective I can recall seeing in opera—effective, moreover, like Berman's, not only in providing an enhancing context for the work, but in making possible the many changes of scene without the usual delays that destroy continuity. Perhaps in the years to come the company will acquire the singers and orchestra capable of the distinguished musical performance for which Montresor provided the visual context; but it hasn't them now. Even the best of the singers, Beverly Sills, who sang the formidable coloratura passages of the Queen of the Night's arias with impressive accuracy, didn't impart to them the intensity they should have. And the tremulous voice of Veronica Tyler (Pamina), the coarse, brassy tenor of Michel Molese (Tamino), the insufficiently weighty bass of Noel Mangin (Sarastro) were incapable of adequate and satisfying realizations of the music they sang. Nor was the orchestra large enough to achieve sound of impressive projective force in the New York State Theater. These major matters aside, I will add that the threadbare condition of John Reardon's baritone was less damaging to Papageno's music; the minor parts were sung adequately; and one delightful departure from custom was the use of three boys to sing the parts of the Three Spirits.

What one has experienced in art conditions one's further experience; and the difficulty some of us have with much of the Royal Ballet or the Bolshoi or Ballet Theater is that we are looking at it with eyes which have seen Balanchine's ballets, and after these find nothing to interest them in MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet,* Ashton's *Daphnis and Chloe,* Culberg's *Miss Julie* and *Moon Reindeer,* de Mille's *Fall River Legend* and more recent pieces of Americana, Glen Tetley's *Sargasso* and *Ricercare.* This was my difficulty in September with the Joffrey Ballet's first season as the new resident company of the New York City Center—my difficulty even with pieces like Robert Joffrey's own *Pas de Déesses* and *Gamelan,* Gerald Arpino's *Viva Vivaldi* and Gloria Contreras' *Moncayao I,* which were put together with skill and pleasant to look at, but which offered the little

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ingenuities of minor talent, as against the fascinating and exciting achievements of great creative power in Balanchine's works. And the difficulty was much greater with most of the other pieces—Arpino's *Incubus* and *Nightwings,* Contreras' *Vitalitas,* Loring's *These Three* —whose movements embodying dramatic ideas or generalized emotional turbulence ranged from uninteresting to awful. From this Joffrey-Arpino-Contreras repertory I got the impression of a semi-professional operation; and contrast of the professional was provided only by Balanchine's *Donizetti Variations* and Ruthanna Boris' *Cakewalk.* The supporting dancers did well in the Balanchine piece; but Susan Magno, who substituted for Stephania Lee, lacked the clarity and style which her solo part required, and Robert Blankshine, who replaced Luis Fuentes, lacked the physical stamina for his taxing part. *Cakewalk,* years ago, in the context of Balanchine's works, had seemed amateurish and corny; but now, seeing it after *Vitalitas* and *Incubus,* I not only found it entertaining but appreciated the solidly professional competence that had produced it. Moreover, it was a piece which the talented company seemed to enjoy doing most, and did best; and it gave me the most enjoyable moments of my evenings in City Center.

It seems clear that the Joffrey Ballet's major problem is that of all the other companies except the New York City Ballet: repertory, and more specifically ballets which can interest and impress people who have seen Balanchine's work. It seems clear also that the Joffrey Ballet is not getting such ballets from Joffrey, Arpino and Contreras—any more than the other companies are getting them from their more celebrated choreographers. But if, as it seems, Balanchine is friendly and co-operative, the solution of the problem is for the Joffrey Ballet to add further ballets of his to its repertory. Not, however, those that are in the current repertory of the New York City Ballet, in which the Joffrey Ballet shouldn't attempt to compete with that company. Rather, it should combine benefit to itself with a valuable service to the public by putting back on view certain great Balanchine works of the past that he is not interested in reviving himself. Clive Barnes suggested one—the *Divertimento* to Haieff's music, which certainly is worth having again; but I think of *Le Baiser de la Fée* and *Danses Concertantes,* which Frederic Franklin could restage, if necessary with the help of some of the dancers of the earlier productions; of *Card Game,* which Todd Bolender and Janet Reed should be able to reconstruct; even of *Cotillon,* which Lazovsky, Lichine, Riabouchinska and Toumanova might be able to reconstruct.

I would extend my suggestion beyond the Joffrey Ballet. The campaign, aided by foundation money, to promote the teaching of ballet throughout the country makes no sense unless there are companies that will employ the dancers when they have finished their studies; the companies have no chance of establishing themselves unless they can offer ballets which the people in their communities find worth

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paying to see; and these ballets are not likely to be provided by local choreographers. The solution is a universal repertory like that of music, which would make available to any company anywhere not only the classics of the distant past like *Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, The Nutcracker* and *Giselle,* but the great contemporary ballets of Balanchine, modern classics like Fokine's *Les Sylphides, The Firebird* and *Petrushka,* Massine's *Le Tricorne,* Ashton's *Facade* and *Wedding Bouquet,* Tudor's *Lilac Garden,* and American classics like Christensen's *Filling Station,* Loring's *Billy the Kid,* de Mille's *Three Virgins and the Devil, Rodeo* and *The Frail Quarry,* Robbins' *Fancy Free* and *Afternoon of a Faun.*

In his superb little book on opera production,[1] Victor Gollancz states a general rule—that each opera unconditionally demands a style of production that will "help in realising the musical-dramatic intention of the work as a whole." And he amplifies this with a couple of negatives—that "the producer must never outrage the musical-dramatic intention . . . in point either of general atmosphere or of detail"; and that he "must never so obtrude his visualities (things seen on the stage) as deliberately to focus a preponderance of attention upon them. . . . The music must never be sacrificed to the stage." These negatives are prompted by actual productions of Zeffirelli, Wieland Wagner, von Karajan and Peter Hall which Gollancz discusses in hair-raising detail—productions of the kind we have been getting from the Metropolitan and the New York City Opera in recent years. And Gollancz quotes a statement by the conductor Giulini which deserves the attention of Rudolf Bing and Julius Rudel: "The young generation places too much emphasis on the eyes, on what they see, and not enough attention on words and music."

In their latest book,[2] Stravinsky and Craft operate separately—Stravinsky in interviews, letters, observations, program notes and book reviews, many of them reprinted from magazines, newspapers and record albums; Craft in diaries, some of them likewise reprinted. Stravinsky's latest music I get no pleasure from hearing; but he writes with a grim pungency and humor that make him a pleasure to read even when I strongly disagree with him. And Craft's observant eye and ironic mind produce fascinating accounts of his experiences with Stravinsky, Auden, Aldous Huxley and the rest.

The legendary Theodore Thomas, founder of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, had—in addition to outstanding musical competence—a stubborn integrity and honor that make his account of his pioneering career[3] very moving.

[1] THE RING AT BAYREUTH: AND SOME THOUGHTS ON OPERATIC PRODUCTION, by *Victor Gollancz* with an afterword by *Wieland Wagner.* E. P. Dutton. $3.50.

[2] THEMES AND EPISODES, by *Igor Stravinsky* and *Robert Craft.* Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95.

[3] THEODORE THOMAS: A MUSICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY, edited by *George P. Upton,* with a new introduction by *Leon Stein.* Da Capo Press. $6.95.

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Now and then a piece of writing in this magazine has an additional interest for me because of its implications for my own subject. One such piece was Robert Garis' perceptive review of Brustein's *Seasons of Discontent* in the Spring, 1966 issue; and what had those implications for me was the section in which Garis quoted from the book a passage that began as follows:

> A drama critic working in a journalistic capacity . . . establishes his claim to serious criticism when discussing a genuine work of art, bringing his whole experience and expertise into the service of analysis, illumination, and interpretation. And this is why I bite with such obvious relish into the occasional masterpieces that come my way; and why, lacking these, I often choose to belabor you with extra-critical lectures on the dismal state of our culture, our theatre, and our national spirit . . .

Garis quoted this in the process of establishing the nature of Brustein's operation as a critic: that "polemic about the crisis of our culture is actually this critic's main interest" and has lessened his ability to bring "experience and expertise" to the critical discussion of genuine art. But the passage—with the words restored that Garis omitted in the first sentence—establishes an additional fact about Brustein's operation that I think valuable to point out, because it is true not only of him but of other critics, and critics not only of drama and literature but of music.

What Brustein is saying in the quoted sentences is that he can write criticism only about the genuine work of art, the masterpiece, and has to write non-criticism when faced with non-art or bad art. Immediately before these sentences he has quoted T. S. Eliot's statement that criticism is "the commentation and analysis of works of art . . . for the elucidation of art and the correction of taste," and has said: "By this definition . . . we all stand condemned of non-critical . . . practices, because in an age of bad literature like our own there is little else to be written on a regular basis." In that age Brustein can only write lectures on culture; and as for other critics:

> A drama critic working in a journalistic capacity, unwilling to lower his standards, and continually confronted with the spurious, the mediocre, and the false, can become a social philosopher like Bernard Shaw, an aesthetician of the stage like Stark Young . . .

But Eliot's phrase "the correction of taste" makes it clear that in his view criticism is concerned with any and all works of art, good or bad; and this view of the matter is correct, whereas Brustein's—that criticism can be written only about good works of art—is incorrect. Moreover, this incorrect idea Brustein supports with factually incorrect statements about Bernard Shaw and Stark Young, whose volumes of writing on music and theater contain large amounts of superb

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criticism that is elicited by "the spurious, the mediocre, and the false" and performs the functions of "elucidation of art and correction of taste." What Brustein calls Young's esthetic discussion of the actor's, the director's and the designer's operations was not something Young resorted to when faced with a bad play, in place of the criticism he could write only of a good one: it was what he considered an integral part of the criticism he wrote of everything presented to him in the theater, good or bad.

Thus it isn't only that Brustein, as Garis said, has a fondness for Big Thinking, but that the big thinking is done on occasion with invented facts in support of invented points. Brustein does this kind of thinking because it is intellectually impressive to him and his readers—more so than the criticism that merely examines the work of art. And since he is someone with critical perception he does the big thinking in addition to the criticism in which he reports on particular works of art. But someone with no critical perception can produce big structures of ideas with entirely invented materials as a substitute for the criticism he is incapable of. And such a pseudo-critic often finds it necessary to believe that only this pretentiously fraudulent operation is real criticism, and even to attack the writing that does no more than examine particular works of art.

I said earlier that all this is true not only of drama and literary critics but of music critics. Virgil Thomson, for example, could write with marvelously accurate perception about the piece of music or performance before him, but often instead preferred to spin out trains of fancy ideas about things made up in his head—the various invented operations of an invented Toscanini; the invented characteristics of an invented Boston Symphony Orchestra that was "the image of [the] city's intellectual ideals." And on the other hand a newcomer, Albert Goldman, whose writing on music has revealed a total lack of the perception he pretends to, traffics in elaborate systematizations of invented ideas about periods, generations, forces, crises and the like that have no connection with any realities, including those of the particular objects which he is incapable of dealing with accurately, and for which he substitutes the invented ones that fit into his systems. And as a writer who goes in for this kind of thing, he attacks the critic who does not.

I don't want to be misunderstood as saying that the writing about a piece of music must end with the critic's examination of it. What I say is that it begins with this examination, whatever else may be added. And I am not alone in this view. I have quoted many times E. M. Forster's statement about the two aims of criticism. "The first and the more important is aesthetic. It considers the object in itself, as an entity, and tells us what it can about its life. The second aim is subsidiary; the relation of the object to the rest of the world." This includes "the conditions under which the work of art was composed,

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the influences which formed it . . . the influence it has exercised on subsequent works"; and Forster concedes that this can be valuable, but contends that it is something additional and subsidiary to the main business of criticism, its "central aesthetic quest." Not only that, but he points out that when criticism is concerned with the subsidiary matters it is no longer in contact with the work of art.

Forster made these statements at the Harvard Symposium of Music Criticism in 1947; and it was gratifying to have him say, in effect, that what I had been doing—examining the object before me and reporting what I found in it—was what he thought the critic should do. And it was good to have this reassurance when I was attacked by the idea-spinners for doing this instead of what they thought the critic should do. Joseph Kerman—who on occasion wrote real and excellent criticism of particular pieces of music, but also put on acts of pretentious intellectualism to impress readers of the literary quarterlies—attacked, among other things, my "stubborn anti-intellectuality" (the other things being the invented deficiencies of an invented Haggin who was "simply not to be taken seriously as a critic of music"). And on the other hand Albert Goldman attacked my mere "unsystematized verdicts" (these in addition to the invented deficiencies that made me unequal to "the crisis of taste" today, and so reprehensible in all ways as to work Goldman up to piranha-like indignation).

My verdicts certainly are not related to any systems like Goldman's; but I would claim for them the kind of coherence described by F. R. Leavis in his reply to René Wellek's urging that he make his assumptions more explicitly and defend them systematically. Leavis explained this request by the fact that Wellek was a philosopher, whereas Leavis was a critic. Philosophy and criticism, said Leavis, were distinct and different disciplines; and to illustrate the difficulty which the practitioner of one of these disciplines had in recognizing the peculiarities of the other, he cited Wellek's reference to Leavis' "ideal of poetry, your 'norm' with which you measure every poem"—which he said revealed Wellek's erroneous idea of the critic's procedure.

> To figure him [Leavis continued] as measuring with a norm which he brings up to the object and applies from the outside is to misrepresent the process. The critic's aim is, first, to realize as sensitively and completely as possible this or that which claims his attention; and a certain valuing is implicit in the realizing. As he matures in experience of the new thing he asks, explicitly and implicitly: "Where does this come? How does it stand in relation to . . . ? How relatively important does it seem?" And the organization into which it settles as a constituent in becoming "placed" is an organization of similarly "placed" things, things that have found their bearings with regard to one another, and not a theoretical system or a system determined by abstract considerations.

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CHARLES HIGHAM

Letter from Sydney

Writing of American literature, Hayden Carruth has said that "we can no more dismiss our provincialism—and its effects—than a hunchback can his hump." The same is, of course, even more painfully true of Australian literature, but there is an important difference. American education now strongly emphasises American literature from the earliest stages; partly because we are still politically tied to Britain through the Commonwealth, but more importantly because we are still intellectually colonial, our children tend to be steeped in *Winnie the Pooh* and *Alice in Wonderland* more thoroughly than in those Australian classics, *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* and Norman Lindsay's splendid *The Magic Pudding*. Nearly every Australian grows up through the important, formative, stages of his literary education with the feeling that Australian writing is essentially second-rate and not quite civilised; that the centre of knowledge is not Melbourne or Sydney, but London; and that the moment money can be put together, anyone with pretensions to education must at once go to England, and —if he is an intellectual—perhaps stay there for good.

This means that the culture is constantly being drained of its talents; and one knows that even if there were to be more encouragement of the arts of acting and music, that actors and musicians would still want to go to London, and have London's judgment: they are not interested very deeply in what their own critics have to say. Perhaps the main reason for the poor quality of the theatre in this country is that no Australian actor sees his future here; his ego cannot be fed in an environment that he at heart despises. It is tragic that, at a time when Australia is advancing at a staggering rate economically, bringing in immigrants at the rate of scores of thousands a year, and attracting favourable notice in America through its policy in Vietnam, that its intellectuals lack all sense of national pride: more than sixty years since the country ceased to be a colony, it still remains one in everything except the strictly technical sense, and you see the inevitable results in slackness, sardonic mistrust, denigration of oneself and others, and finally a capitulation to a kind of hedonistic hopelessness.

This lack of a central pride somehow throws the whole country out of focus, not only for foreigners, but for those living in it as well. Even the Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt, speaking at a gathering at the White House, called Australia "a community of people": it was *Johnson* who called it a nation. On the whole, Holt reflected the feelings of most Australians. This is a *community*—devoted to the prac-

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tical ideals of egalitarianism, health and happiness, and the protection of the weak: an Anglo-Saxon, boy scout philosophy that has developed a handsome, cheerful, financially comfortable and conformist race living in a kind of Baden-Powell paradise in the South Seas.

Admirable in many ways, of course, and—if one excepts the long periods of drought and flood which crush the farm settlers' hopes, and the heavy, mind-emptying humid summers of the coastal cities—Australia is a very pleasant place to live in, far pleasanter than overcrowded, soot-blackened Britain, and wonderfully free of American tensions, while enjoying, in the cities at least, Southern Californian standards of ease, sun and comfort. The skies, even in the centers of the cities, shine a fierce blue; the warm, unpolluted oceans are still as azure as the Caribbean; and many Sydney suburbs remind one of Bermuda, with their American-Colonial Buildings, yacht harbors, green plunging hills and houses dotted among palms beyond the brash, nervous commercial center. Yet the sad thing is that very few of the writers seem to *see* the beauty around them, and most of the painters still seem either to reflect international styles in abstraction, thus cutting out the light and the landscape altogether, or turn to the subdued and sombre colors of England for their inspiration: the most gifted of the younger painters, Brett Whiteley, significantly lives in London, and most of his compatriot artists have spent long periods there, and are planning another trip; the best of our art critics, Robert Hughes, is now writing for the London *Sunday Times,* not for a Sydney or a Melbourne paper, as one feels he should be. It is all too typical of a run-away colonial culture like this: no-one knows exactly what "Australia" is, or "Australians" are. Sometimes they seem British, sometimes American, both to themselves and others. Although no different from the humdrum occupants of British or American suburbs in their devotion to sporting events, gardening, car-washing and television, and their ignorance of politics and the arts, middle-class Australians tend to consider themselves inferior to the people of either nationality (the working class is more nationalistic). Significantly, there is no film industry, because the idea of backing star personalities, directors and writers with public money is in essence un-Australian: no Australian *can* be glamorous by definition, or is permitted to display egocentricity and temperament.

Australian writers—and writers are an egocentric if unglamorous breed—have to appear average and "nice" to be accepted. Americans and the English find the flamboyant and unpredictable behaviour of their famous authors (and actors and artists) diverting and entertaining: Australians do not. If a genius has a clean face, a pleasant manner, and does not make a fuss, he is all right. Otherwise, he is likely to be shown the door—and leaves.

Not surprisingly in such an environment, theatre has floundered. It is an art that depends on egocentric, difficult and impassioned men

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working at full stretch: men of that kind are not encouraged here. Moreover, a strong native theatre would involve the placing of faith in Australians: they must be built as stars, and their egos richly fed. That faith is not available; an Australian will only be made the star of a major commercial production when no star in England or America can be found. Playwrights are not encouraged, developed and built up by the commercial or non-commercial theatres. The overseas play or television series must be better, not merely because (we are a tight-fisted people) it can be obtained more cheaply, but because it was *not conceived by an Australian,* and therefore may be good.

Only two major breakthroughs have occurred in the Australian arts, and both are due to foreigners. Rudy Komon, a Czechoslovakian art dealer, has in his few years in Australia succeeded both in making Australian painters see their own merits and in teaching them how to sell internationally; he has also become a contact for foreign millionaires wanting to buy Australian work. Peggy van Praagh, formerly of the Convent Garden Ballet, has created an Australian Ballet Company which has toured the world, given its members wholehearted encouragement, built their egos, and arranged, with the aid of an anglicised Australian, Robert Helpmann, to have Australian-composed and-written ballets performed, sometimes with Nureyev and Fonteyn as visiting artists. What we now need is an English or American figure to take over the drama in the same way, to build up a theatre workshop, to make players feel part of a growing tradition, to commission plays from our writers, and to establish one resident and one world touring company performing those plays. In this way, Australian actors could reach the world without losing their national identity. The failure of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust—an organisation ostensibly devoted to the support of the Australian performing arts, and financed by the taxpayers—to do these things is a disgrace, and yet another proof of Australians' lack of faith in other Australians' abilities.

Most Australian critics fail to publish internationally. The majority think they have no business to tackle American or English writing except in a tentative way—in their own publications. Almost none dares pronounce on the major foreign figures of the period in the pages of an international magazine; until 1960 the leading weekly *The Bulletin* only reviewed Australian writings and reprinted (or plagiarized) British reviews are everywhere to be found. Some years ago, a well-known Australian critic, H. G. Kippax, said to me: "Don't you feel it's hopeless, reviewing a book here six weeks after London?" I replied that I did not, partly because I believed in my own judgment as much as I believed in that of the English critics, Raymond Mortimer or Cyril Connolly, and partly because critics in America would be reviewing the books long after Australia in many cases. Were *they* to be taken less than seriously because of that? I am afraid that Kippax only

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forgave me because I had been born in England. And the other day, when I asked an important young poet why he did not send poems abroad, he said that neither his own, nor any other Australian's work, was good enough to be published anywhere else but in Australia. When an Australian article is published here, it may well attract no notice; when it appears in England or America it is reprinted with a flourish, as though it had never appeared here before.

It is typical of the whole situation that Australia's best-known novelist, Patrick White, was born and educated in England, gives our younger writers no encouragement, takes no part in the intellectual life, and remains in absolute isolation from everyone—his novels, characteristically colonial, pour bitter scorn on Australians and Australia: the only tolerable characters in them are Europeans (apart from the occasional Aboriginal) and the only attractive landscapes described are Greek, English or Irish. White's last two books deal with immigrants destroyed by Australia, or narrowly avoiding destruction by a firm adherence to a vision of beauty not one of their fellows possesses. His most brilliantly sustained work, *Riders in the Chariot,* tells the story of four immigrants to Sydney; a German writer, Himmelfarb, an English spinster, Miss Hare, an Aboriginal painter, Alf Dubbo, and an Irish washerwoman, Mrs. Godbold. All suffer appalling cruelties at the hands of Australians, and are practically swallowed up by Australian conformism and the suburban wilderness; even the vegetation which consumes their houses is seen by White as evil. In White's latest book, *The Solid Mandala,* the Thibetan mandala, or symbol of totality, again saves from destruction by Australians a Divine Fool, the English immigrant clerk, Arthur Brown; his twin brother, Waldo, is destroyed because he is too intellectual to grasp the mandala when Arthur offers it to him in the form of a child's marble. White's belief that only the mindless can reach divinity is a peculiarly Australian notion.

White in many ways represents the Australian Colonial paradox. On the one hand he decries the desecrations of the landscape by the suburban developers; on the other hand he limns Australian vegetation with that very hatred which has driven the English to destroy so much of the natural beauty of the continent and replace it on the cities' fringes with simulacrums of British suburbs, complete with plaster elves and rockeries. He expresses a yearning for the English landscape with its softer colors and the deeply civilised beauty of its villages, yet through a tangle of colonial complexes is drawn to the savage and splendid dazzle of Australian foliage and flowers. He hates the minds of Australians, yet he is deeply attracted by their physical beauty and their animal energy and freedom.

Morris West is no less Australian in choosing to ignore Australia altogether. *The Devil's Advocate,* about a dead man's testing for sainthood, was a smoothly adept best-seller, set in Italy; only the savage

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portrait of a homosexual artist conveyed the native flavor—a hatred and fear of the sexual misfit which has driven many gifted homosexuals abroad. West's later novels, *The Ambassador,* set in South-East Asia, and *The Shoes of the Fisherman,* again set in Italy, dealt respectively with the American war commitment and with the problems of electing a new Pope: slick inventions along the lines of Irving Wallace's Kinsey Report and Nobel Prize opportunist excursions, they scarcely added to West's reputation as a writer of talent, and contained no native touches.

A less known and younger writer, Randolph Stow, wrote in *To the Islands, Tourmaline* and *The Merry-go-Round-in-the-Sea,* moving novels which expressed a mingled awe and dislike of the Australian outback; the last two works showed how to an innocent eye the whole scene appeared enchanting, while adulthood brought with it the load of colonial complexes I spoke of earlier. One senses that Stow, who is still only 31, may be able for the first time to emerge beyond the pain of colonialism and create a literature which utterly accepts the environment.

Other novelists to have obtained prominence are Hal Porter, a baroque stylist whose portraits of Australians—most notably in a brilliant series of short stories—are generally as bitter as White's; and Christopher Koch, whose lyrical and tender poetic talent has emerged in two fine books. *The Boys in the Island,* set in the island state of Tasmania, shows how it is possible to be colonial *within* an intellectual colony: the boys long to escape to the "big city" of Melbourne. *Beyond the Sea Wall* again deals with the pain of the colonial: the central figure, a gifted young man, deserts the Australian city he hates and sails for England and the intellectual centre of London; but tragically his journey is interrupted and he returns, after a brief sojourn in India, full of bitterness and a sense of failure. Although neither work is a complete artistic success, both express more movingly than any other author's the feelings of young Australians 12,000 miles from their true capital. Koch has travelled restlessly from Australia to London, experienced colonial disillusionment, gone to America, and finally Italy, returning here and travelling again, restless, lost, and utterly typical of his whole generation in this: his agony and lack of a sense of identity are entirely Australian.

The two most distinguished poets, A. D. Hope and James McAuley, have both written with great bitterness of Australia, while maintaining, in their direct and unselfconscious expression of the physical pleasures, and in their solid and rugged technique, a very Australian flavor. Their insistence on strictly formal modes and their rejection of every poetic invention from Eliot on is also characteristic; they emphasise simple directness and positive forthrightness: a return to the Victorian virtues. An Australian conservatism and purity combine with the qualities of Australian speech to produce a body

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of work that has assimilated and transcended its provincial origins. The fact that both poets in their criticism of poetry insist on its being understood perfectly at a first reading could not be more Australian, since in an egalitarian context there can be little or no patience with the eccentric, the difficult, and the obscure.

A. D. Hope has recently attracted attention abroad, both because he brings his Australian directness to a ferocious survey of mankind's contemporary ills, and because he reflects an internationally increasing emphasis on sexual freedom in his joyful celebrations of physical love. Louis Untermeyer, among other critics, has compared him to Swift; he is also reminiscent of the bellicose South African poet Roy Campbell. More obvious and muscular than Lowell (whose use of free verse he would presumably deplore), A. D. Hope hits hard at the same targets: that "savage servility slides by on grease" through Hope's images too.

James McAuley reminds one of Yvor Winters in his rigorous attacks on Eliot and others whom he sees as representatives of modern decadence, on free verse, and on the whole contemporary world and its idols. Like Yvor Winters—though he is much more gifted—he writes poetry of a strongly traditionalist character: his several poems about swans have a Tennysonian quality, though the texture has been rinsed by a neo-Augustan rationality. McAuley's latest important poem, the Corneillean epic *Captain Quiros,* deals with the arrival of Catholic seamen and missionaries in the pagan South Seas. Its sobriety and remoteness, its brilliant clarity and purity, single it out as a very Australian work. McAuley first came into prominence with an internationally famous scandal. In the 1940s he and another Australian poet, the Buddhist Harold Stewart, manufactured a fake poet, Ern Malley; Malley's work showed what the co-authors believed to be the worst features of modernism. No two consecutive lines made sense, and the material was drawn from a number of textbooks selected at random, including one on drainage and sewerage: the obvious American parallel is with the Spectra Hoax. Malley's work was submitted to Max Harris, editor of the famous Australian literary magazine, *Angry Penguins,* by McAuley and Stewart pretending to be the author's widow: Malley, "she" said, had been a garage mechanic who had died of Graves' disease: an obvious reference to Robert Graves. Harris published the poems, and declared them the work of a genius; soon the world followed Harris in pronouncing Malley the first Australian poet of international quality. T. S. Eliot, Herbert Read, and several American poets called Malley remarkable; then Stewart and McAuley triumphantly dropped the bombshell: they had cooked the whole Malley corpus up in an afternoon. Several international careers trembled, and the course of modernism was stultified in Australia for more than two decades.

Better known than McAuley, in England at least, Judith Wright

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also sets herself against the modern trend; she writes as though Eliot and Pound has never happened. In isolation even within isolated Australia, she lives on a mountain top in Queensland, reminding one of the late Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral in her remote but anguished contemplation of the world, and sometimes of Emily Dickinson, sometimes of Emily Bronte in her simple, uncluttered technique. She chiefly concentrates on the rain-forests, trees and tropical birds of her adopted state, using an oddly anachronistic diction to express her knotted, taut thinking in lyric terms.

Rosemary Dobson shares McAuley's and Hope's fondness for clear, sunlit images, immediately comprehensible language, and an optimistic celebration of physical life: she is the precise opposite of an Anne Sexton or a Sylvia Plath. Her style, delicate and bland, reflects a healthful, happy and sensible intelligence; the grand-daughter of Austin Dobson, she reflects her ancestor's gravity of tone. She writes of paintings, of her own feelings as a woman, of the Greek myths, or of the Australian bush country, expressing a satisfied calm, even a glowing joy that could not easily be found in British or American writing today.

One immigrant, the New Zealander Douglas Stewart, shares Rosemary Dobson's ability to praise nature without Georgian sentimentality or fulsomeness. He, too, ignores the colonial agonies and concentrates with a pre-Industrial Revolution simplicity and innocence on the flowers, trees and birds of an untouched Australia. His language is unsophisticated, his mind sane and free. There are glancing, humorous poems—about Professor Piccard, the balloonist, or other eccentric figures; at times, as in *Rutherford,* a sustained tribute to his great compatriot, the tone is more elevatedly rhetorical. But always there is a clean, masculine decency and energy, a cheerfulness, that are typical products of that Anglo-Saxon paradise state I spoke of earlier.

Randolph Stow belongs in the same group: his poems are celebratory, rapt and serene, although touched occasionally with a sardonic Australian humor. W. Hart-Smith, the most adventurous of the Australian poets, writes largely in a complex series of invented forms, influenced chiefly by Lorca and Machado, though there are Latin American presences here as well. His enchanting humor and dazzling use of complex and almost invisible internal rhymes and half-rhymes single him out; he, too, records with evident delight the flora and fauna of his country, and seems no less remote from the torments of the twentieth century. Another fine poet, R. D. Fitzgerald, reminds one of Robert Frost: strong, flinty and grave, his work has a broad-shouldered earnestness and optimism that are very appealing.

I do not want to call these poets a school—but they do share certain feelings and modes. One group of poets, linked together more for a critic's convenience than for any powerful communion of interests,

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represents a different view of life: this group is centered in Melbourne, a city reminiscent of nineteenth century Washington in its dignity, elegance and charm. Melbourne poets tend to be introspective and wry; they paint in rather darker colors than their compatriots. Evan Jones, one of the most notable of them, has been influenced by W. D. Snodgrass, and Alexander Craig, who has appeared in THE HUDSON REVIEW, has evidently absorbed Lowell and William Stafford. Although these poets deplore the thin-bloodedness of much contemporary English poetry (Philip Larkin is a favorite conversational target), they resemble their English counterparts in their subdued elegance and insistence on propriety of diction. So, too, does Vivian Smith, a Tasmanian poet whose melting, languid and beautiful evocations of Australian scenes remind one at times of Rilke, at times of Leopardi, though the most obvious local influence is McAuley.

These still developing figures—most of the Melburnians, Stow and Smith are of the generation in its early thirties to which I also belong —make up a rich texture: richer than the contemporary British scene, though not comparable with the American. And the existence of a Commonwealth Literary Fund is a constant encouragement: the Fund, presided over by the Prime Minister, the leader of the Opposition, and a group of poets of the oldest generation, subsidises publishers against loss on publication of approved books of verse, pays out many thousands of Australian dollars a year to writers on specific projects, and provides pensions and grants to needy or aged authors. And one should not ignore the always surprising and agreeable interest in poetry taken by newspaper editors and middle-class readers here. Poems are prominently featured and books of poetry prominently reviewed in the press, and many a hardened businessman takes pride in Judith Wright and Rosemary Dobson. It is as though even the most Philistine Australian realised that, in the colonial darkness I spoke of earlier, the poetry casts a necessary and healing light.

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Reviews

MARVIN MUDRICK

Mars or Venus?

ANYBODY WHO THINKS THAT LOVE IS THE LAST HOPE of humanity will find little comfort in either of these books.[1] Man, says Robert Ardrey, is by unimpaired primary instinct a "territorial animal," a full-time property-defender and not much of a lover at all:

> . . . it may come to us as the strangest of thoughts that the bond between a man and the soil he walks on should be more powerful than his bond with the woman he sleeps with. Even so, in a rough, preliminary way we may test the supposition with a single question: How many men have you known of, in your lifetime, who died for their country? And how many for a woman?

How do we vindicate Venus against Mars? Perhaps Ardrey's through-the-looking-glass logic will impel a platoon of red-blooded American males, dander erect, to charge out and be done in by the nearest authentic *femme fatale,* with bayonets for fingernails and spike heels and her killing glances. Meanwhile, the rest of us can be charmed by the chauvinistic political implications of biological territorialism. The United States, says Ardrey, outproduces the Soviet Union in agriculture because a capitalist economy indulges man's property-defending instinct as a collective economy cannot. The U. S. Department of Agriculture will be startled to learn from Ardrey that this is a land of small, prosperous family farms ("The smallness of American farms is among the best-kept secrets in the arsenal of American power"), which triumph and multiply in accordance with Ardrey's homely illustrations of the property-principle:

> Much more recently I visited a kibbutz in Israel. The kibbutz is the only successful collective farm in the history of modern agriculture. I was skeptical: was it truly a success? Between Tel-Aviv and Haifa there is one of the oldest and most respected of Israeli kibbutzim, Gan Shmuel, the Garden of Samuel. Here 400 adults farm 1200 acres and in the year before my visit produced crops valued at about $1.5 million. The special circumstance of Israeli vision and dedication, and the special situation of their nation besieged, might account for the success; but that Gan Shmuel is a success is unarguable. Then, however, I visited a private farm on comparable land only a few miles away. Here a former Polish doctor and his son and

[1] THE TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE, by *Robert Ardrey.* Atheneum. $6.95. ON AGGRESSION, by *Konrad Lorenz.* Harcourt, Brace & World. $5.75.

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> their wives worked thirty acres. Productivity per acre was about the same as at the kibbutz, but I was struck by a difference. On the collective farm it would have required nine adults to work thirty acres; on the private farm it took only four. I inquired. The former Polish doctor stretched: "Well, *they* work eight hours a day."

The reader will call to mind his own illustrations: sturdy Rodgers-and-Hammerstein hayseeds whose thirty acres, cultivated by star-spangled instinct, put to shame the huge mechanized and automated farms and ranches of America; or, in the cities, those fly-specked family groceries, open from dawn till midnight, which across the nation are driving the supermarkets out of business; or everywhere the horse, which has just about done away with the automobile.

Still, things aren't so rosy as they might be. Not only are men by instinct property-defenders, they are also hunters who "enjoy the chase and the kill"; their "normal conditon" is "mutual animosity":

> I am sure that in a generalization so broad, the ethologist, with an eye on species lacking any discernible capacity for foresight, would prefer that I speak of appetite and consummation rather than purpose and achievement. And in truth, if we speak of our own sexual behavior, it becomes a little grand to speak of sexual purpose to describe what occurs in the eyes of a man and a woman when they look at each other in a wondering way. It is a little pompous to speak of achievement when hostilities have been suspended and energies channeled, and a wondering look has been converted into a mutual orgasm. Yet the pattern has been followed. With consummation, amity will vanish and hostilities and suspicions will be resumed unless rewards have been such as to arouse further mutual desire. It then becomes an affair. But sooner or later the affair will end; he will go his way, she hers, rarely with residual amity. . . .

So much for man's all too quickly passing fancies. Ardrey is a hard-nosed huckster of biological doom, celebrated at the Book-of-the-Month Club as no truckler to sentiment ("I am not, as is fairly well known, an apologist for Sigmund Freud"), a former playwright ("A playwright," says Ardrey, "is a specialist in human nature"; but the definition would be more modest if it began, "A good playwright . . ."); not a man to shirk the truth:

> . . . there will be hazard, most particular hazard, in the chance that we may discover ourselves the pale prisoners of a determinate past, whereas before we were at worst the nervous victims of an indeterminate future. But it is a chance I believe worth taking: in part, because I have reason to suspect that this will not be biology's answer; in part, because I believe that the winning of self-knowledge is worth every risk; and in part, because I have no choice, for truth is peering in my window and I cannot ask him to go away.

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What *is* the truth, anyhow? Einstein discovered $e = mc_2$; Ardrey has come up with his own epochal equation, $A = E + h$. As far as one can judge from Ardrey's mad-hatter mathematics, he appears to regard this equation as a symbolic representation of the "fact" that man's "amity" is not instinctive, but only the sum of intraspecific "enmity" ("those forces of antagonism . . . originating in members of one's own species") and "hazard" ("those threats which do not originate in one's own species"). Ardrey concludes from his equation (deaf to the anguished shouts of six-year-olds enrolled in Arithmetic 1-A) that, as man conquers hazard and so reduces h to zero, E will grow to infinity and A will vanish. But genius is the benefactor of its very blunders. Ardrey fails to see—and the human race can breathe a collective (or capitalistic) sigh of relief—that his equation "proves" quite the reverse of what he glumly fears: not that A will vanish, but that, whatever the seesaw between E and h, there will always be enough of both to make up a positive quantity of amiable innocence among the dupes who print, peddle, purchase, and adore the bloated pronunciamentos of mountebanks like Ardrey.

A mountebank may, of course, be not simply a salesman of mud and colored water. He may be clever and busy enough to cannibalize bits of knowledge from the work of savants: of a whole academy of ethologists, for example, Konrad Lorenz among them, to whom Ardrey genuflects while he more or less subtly misrepresents their lifework as evidence for his own delicious intimations of Armageddon.

The trick is to underline in red the more immediately unsettling implications of their discoveries, and to ignore the inferences that convincingly balance and qualify. Consider two of Lorenz's most important observations, and how Ardrey abuses them. In *On Aggression* Lorenz makes clear, for instance, that "intraspecific aggression is millions of years older than personal friendship and love":

> . . . there are animals totally devoid of aggression which keep together for life in firmly united flocks. One would think that such animals would be predestined to develop permanent friendships and brotherly unions of individuals, and yet these characteristics are never found among such peaceable herd creatures; their association is always entirely anonymous. A personal bond, an individual friendship, is found only in animals with highly developed intraspecific aggression; in fact, this bond is the firmer, the more aggressive the particular animal and species is. There are few more aggressive fish than cichlids, few more aggressive birds than geese. Proverbially the most aggressive of all mammals, Dante's *bestia senza pace,* the wolf, is the most faithful of friends. Some animals are alternately territorial and aggressive, and nonaggressive and social, according to the season, and in these species every personal bond is limited to the period of aggressiveness. Undoubtedly the personal

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> bond developed at that phase of evolution when, in aggressive animals, the co-operation of two or more individuals was necessary for a species-preserving purpose, usually brood tending. Doubtless the personal bond, love, arose in many cases from intraspecific aggression, by way of ritualization of a redirected attack or threatening. Since these rites are tied up with the person of the partner, and since they later become a need as independent instinct actions, they make the presence of a partner an absolute necessity . . .

Moreover, Lorenz presents remarkable experimental evidence that even the "maternal instinct" is not positive and underived, but an *exacerbation* of aggression: "special inhibitions against aggression are very necessary because a brood-tending animal parent, at the time when it has young, must be particularly aggressive toward every other living creature." In turkey hens, as an experiment with surgically deafened turkey hens proved, the inhibition is not vaporously maternal, or even matter-of-factly visual, but a special recognizable sound:

> The deaf turkey hens incubated quite normally, and previously to this their social and mating behavior was likewise normal, but when their chicks hatched their maternal behavior proved to be affected in a highly dramatic way: all the deaf hens pecked their children to death as soon as they hatched. A deaf hen which has sat on false eggs for the normal incubating period should be prepared to accept chicks, but if she is shown a day-old poult she does not react with maternal behavior: she utters no call notes but, if the baby approaches within yards, she raises her feathers defensively, hisses furiously, and as soon as the chick is within reach of her beak she pecks it as hard as she can. If we assume that the hen is in no way deranged other than in her hearing faculty, there can be only one interpretation of this behavior: she does not possess the slightest innate information as to what her chicks should look like, and she pecks at everything which moves near her nest and which is not so big that her escape reaction transcends her aggression. Only the sound expression of the cheeping chick elicits innate maternal behavior and puts aggression under inhibition.
>
> The following experiments with normally hearing turkey hens confirm the accuracy of this interpretation. If a natural-looking, stuffed chick is pulled, like a puppet, on a long string toward a brooding turkey hen, she pecks at it exactly as the deaf hen does. But if we build into the dummy a little loudspeaker which transmits from a tape recording the "crying" of a turkey poult, the intervention of an evidently violent inhibition will brake the attack just as suddenly as in the case of the cichlids described above, and the hen will begin to utter the typical call notes which, in the turkey, correspond to the clucking of the barnyard hen.

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The omission in Ardrey's sensationalizations consists, here, of Lorenz's emphasis on those inhibition mechanisms, and redirecting ritualizations, of the aggressive instinct which have enabled all "animals with highly developed intraspecific aggression" to develop such an extraordinary secondary instinct as love. And, whereas Ardrey seizes on Lorenz's view of love as derived to insist that it must therefore be feeble and subordinate, Lorenz himself grants all "secondary instincts" full status in "the parliament of instincts":

> . . . it is an error to assume that the "big four"—hunger, sexuality, flight, and aggression—are irresistible tyrants whose commands brook no contradiction. It is not even true that the more widely distributed and phylogenetically older sources of motivation always dominate over more specialized and more recently evolved instincts. Some of those special drives which guarantee a permanent aggregation of social animals rule the individual so strongly that under certain conditions they can supersede all other drives . . .

Oddly, the obvious inference that love might be another such special drive with overmastering power is one that Lorenz seems reluctant to draw (as Ardrey, riding his race-suicide hobbyhorse, is resolved to ignore it). Perhaps the natural scientist, dealing with geological ages as well as instincts that began with and remain discouragingly unaltered from the protozoa, is by the influence of his discipline a social conservative, a prophet who puts his money on inhibition rather than impulse. But Lorenz's own insistence on the strength and status of the secondary instincts makes love as much a possible counterforce against aggression as the turkey hen's acoustical inhibition against killing her chicks, which is after all the beginning of motherly love.

Lorenz rather touchingly hopes that international sports and man's sense of humor will do the job against man's instinctual threat to his own survival. No doubt both are helpful. The star spectator, however, at the last pre-World-War-II Olympic Games was Adolf Hitler; and, though jokes may keep us sane on the road to the gas chamber, they are made more often by the guards than by the prisoners. Love—"the personal bond," as Lorenz calls it—is the one game of the instincts, primary or derived, that requires a personal, responsive, and continuous audience. Some of Lorenz's most impressive testimony concerns the strength and durability of the attachments between greylag geese, not only "lovers" but "friends." Indeed, Lorenz is both the strict scientist, and faithful to his affection for the fascinating creatures, when he declares that the quotation marks falsify, because these are true lovers and friends, they flourish in each other's company, mourn apart, rejoice when reunited, droop and dwindle when love has gone:

> All the objectively observable characteristics of the goose's behav-

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> ior on losing its mate are roughly identical with those accompanying human grief. This applies particularly to the phenomena observable in the sympathetic nervous system. John Bowlby, in his study of infant grief, has given an equally convincing and moving description of this primal grieving, and it is almost incredible how detailed are the analogies we find here in human beings and in birds. Just as in the human face, it is the neighborhood of the eyes that in geese bears the permanent marks of deep grief. The lowering of the tonus in the sympathicus causes the eye to sink back deeply in its socket and, at the same time, decreases the tension of the outer facial muscles supporting the eye region from below. Both factors contribute to the formation of a fold of loose skin below the eye which as early as in the ancient Greek mask of tragedy had become the conventionalized expression of grief. My dear old greylag Ada, several times a widow, was particularly easy to recognize because of the grief-marked expression of her eyes. A knowledgeable visitor who knew nothing about Ada's history standing beside me at the lake suddenly pointed her out among many geese, saying, "That goose must have been through a lot!"

Yet man, able to love and possessing, besides, "the greatest gift of all, rational, responsible morality," is the potential victim of this paradox: "The only being capable of dedicating himself to the very highest moral and ethical values requires for this purpose a phylogenetically adapted mechanism of behavior whose animal properties bring with them the danger that he will kill his brother, convinced that he is doing so in the interests of those very same high values." If one begins with Lorenz's unquestioning devotion to the "rational, responsible morality" of social tradition, and shares his disquiet at the present break in cultural continuity between the generations, there is no alternative to his acute apprehension and faint hope (which taken together he bravely calls "optimism").

On the other hand, just suppose that "responsible morality" and "social tradition," "order" and "duty," prove to be evolutionarily primitive inhibition mechanisms against biological aggression; that they are being succeeded, or at least richly supplemented, by less patently reactive and compulsory personal energies; that the evolving forms of love show themselves as more various, more genial, and more easily inhibitory of violence than "the very highest moral and ethical values" have ever managed to be; that Lorenz is wrong because, pillar of rationalistic rectitude, he trusts too little in the beneficent secondary instincts he so eloquently certifies.

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ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS

Invaded Selves[1]

IT IS KIEV, RUSSIA, IN 1911, and there have not been any years after 1911. You are Andryusha Yushchinsky, aged thirteen. You live in the suburb of Slobodka, but you used to live across the Dnieper River in the Lukyanovka district where there are still caves and patches of wood. You like to go back there to play with your pal Zhenya Cheberyak. You like especially to play on the cement mixer in the brick yard. You, Andryusha Yushchinsky, whirl Zhenya Cheberyak around on the bar that a horse pulls when the mixer is in use. But you should not be playing hookey now this Saturday in March, going across the river to find Zhenya Cheberyak. You do not know that you will never come back.

Or perhaps you can more easily be the lawyer Margolin. You are a good man but not a wise man, and you should not have let the journalist Brazul-Brushkovsky persuade you to meet secretly in a hotel room in Kharkhov with Zhenya Cheberyak's mother, Vera Cheberyak. It is now March, 1912. She is a woman of bad reputation, and you never know what direction her lies will take. Because of this interview you have to withdraw as defense attorney for Mendel Beiliss, charged with the murder of Andryusha Yushchinsky.

But can you also be the young revolutionary, Karayev, idol of criminals, who once killed a prison warden and got away with it? This is not so easy. Can you be *you* and such a man also? You worked briefly for the Okhrana, the Czarist secret police, and now to recover your reputation with the Left you trap into a confession one of the men who really murdered Andryusha Yushchinsky. But you are quickly arrested and sent off to Siberia before you can testify at Beiliss's trial.

Can you be the Lithuanian Catholic priest and extortioner Pranaitis who concocts, out of pamphlets by charlatans, fantasies of the Jewish use of fresh Christian blood that even the pogromists who employ you find implausible? Can you be the young Frenchman Miffle whom Vera Cheberyak blinded with sulphuric acid in a fit of jealous rage? You did not let her be prosecuted for it; you still want her and she brings food to you. But you beat her, too. Or can you be Vera Cheberyak herself, stopping with a hasty kiss the mouth of your dying son Zhenya, whom you have probably poisoned, when he seems about to say something revealing to the police?

[1] BLOOD ACCUSATION, THE STRANGE HISTORY OF THE BEILISS CASE, by *Maurice Samuel*. Knopf. $5.95. THE FIXER, by *Bernard Malamud*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux $5.75. THE OPOPONAX, by *Monique Wittig*. Simon and Schuster. $4.95. TREMOR OF INTENT, by *Anthony Burgess*. W. W. Norton. $4.95. NORMAN'S LETTER, by *Gavin Lambert*. Coward-McCann. $5.50. A DREAM OF KINGS, by *Harry Mark Petrakis*. David McKay. $4.50. OFFICE POLITICS, by *Wilfrid Sheed*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $4.95.

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It is easy to be Andryusha Yushchinsky when you are playing near the brick factory or cutting switches in the wood. Are you still Andryusha as you retreat in terror into the back bedroom of Vera's flat? Is his consciousness yours until the stab wounds and loss of blood make it fade into nothingness for ever? Obviously you cannot be Andryusha Yushchinsky while his body lies for eight days decaying in one of the Lukyanovka caves. He has been stabbed forty-seven times. In one of his pockets is a mysterious fragment of torn pillowslip encrusted with blood and semen.

The *you*'s and present tense and repetition of full names I have borrowed from Monique Wittig's novel, *The Opoponax;* the people and their experiences I have taken from Maurice Samuel's *Blood Accusation: The Strange History of the Beiliss Case,* and from an earlier book by Alexander Tager, *The Decay of Czarism: The Beiliss Trial.* This case, of course, was used as a basis for Bernard Malamud's novel, *The Fixer,* but before discussing that novel I want to examine the implication of Monique Wittig's technique. It helps make clear what Bernard Malamud as a novelist is doing and failing to do when he uses history.

Except for a few persistently repeated technical devices, Mlle. Wittig's prize-winning novel ("acclaimed by Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute and Mary McCarthy") is a thoroughly conventional rendering of a sensitive French schoolgirl's growing into adolescence. All the familiar experiences are here, often several times repeated: injuries, play in the garden and the woods, misadventures in toilets, bullying, boring lessons, classroom rebellions, crushes on teachers, crushes on classmates, jealousy, nightmares, alienation from others, solace in fantasy, trips, fights with boys, church services, funerals of teachers, of classmates, of classmates' mothers.

The emphasis is fashionably on physical objects and on people doing things that can be objectively noted; on brief, easily remembered or summarized speeches. Catherine Legrand's own memories, expectations, evaluations and consciousness in general are largely to be inferred from what she notices and reports. Full names are repeated literally hundreds of times: "Very carefully Veronique Legrand covers several stones with pink paste. Catherine Legrand sees Ines on the widest of roads. Ines is surrounded with children. . . ."

Because of this unwillingness to do more than imply inner depths of consciousness, "she" is used rarely for the heroine, and "I" never. In the innumerable short primer sentences describing her actions, the central self is either Catherine Legrand or—most characteristically—*you.* "You are walking along the river. You are stooping. You move at a crouch. . . . You go into the forest to cut branches. You must put a new layer of foliage on the roof of the hut to keep out the water. You walk through the dense, damp underbrush." In the original French text "you" is "on": *"On marche le long de la rivière. On est à moitié baissé. On advance en pliant les genoux."*

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Once you become conscious of pronouns, "you" interferes with the illusion it is intended to create. The first "you" in my last sentence meant "one, anyone in this particular limited situation." I, the writer, happened to be the one thinking, but I was confident that your thinking in the same circumstances would have been the same.

When an instructor in cooking or automobile driving says, "You let out the brake slowly" or "you take two eggs and separate the whites and yolks," the "you" is really you. Listening to him, you imagine doing what you will soon do in fact. You are also "one" in the sense that this is what anyone should do who wants to get the proper effects. In such elementary actions personality, uniqueness, the complexity of being a self do not count, except as obstacles.

The reflective self is always "I"—never "you." When it considers how its acts and thought might look to other people, it may give itself the social objectification of a name, "Catherine Legrand," for instance. But the thought that someone else might *become* you, might enter all the recesses of consciousness, is terrifying. This is true even where sympathy is closest, with parents and pals in childhood, and with the other partner in a good marriage. Reserves remain; the otherness is part of the joy. If in the profoundest experiences selves could be fully shared, if in the sexual act of love the husband were also the wife being loved by himself, and the wife the husband loving herself, selves and love would both disappear in inconceivabilities of multiplied narcissism.

In French *"on"* can mean variously "someone," "I," "he," "we," "you," and "they." When Mlle. Wittig's translator, Helen Weaver, consistently uses "you," it means that fragments of experience are not only being shared and communized, but in a sense imposed. An act of will is exercised upon the reader. He is given directions: "Imagine that your skin is the skin of Catherine Legrand, and that it feels flayed and salted from playing wildly in the hay. Imagine that you sit at night in the bus snuggled up to Valerie Borge. Her hair spills on your shoulder and you hold tight to her hand."

But what really are you to feel? You are not a French schoolgirl. How much of the real self that consents to the imagining goes along with the imagining and gets mixed up in it?

The one who chooses words is a novelist, an unknown self, hidden behind the work. She is not sharing response to immediate experience while it occurs, as children do, talking aloud as they play. She is a young adult looking back to several different periods of her life. "You" calls attention to itself as a technical device, a word chosen along with others to make a deliberated pattern years later, in a kind of formulation quite incompatible with the nowness claimed by use of the present tense. Or we can think of the words as arranged to impose on the reader an imaginative experience of a particular kind which occurs only as he reads. The novelist's present as she writes is going to be the reader's future.

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We are not deceived by the simplicity of Mlle. Wittig's sentences. It is an artful simplicity which leaves out too much. But the very obvious restrictions which her technique imposes make us aware of less obvious restrictions occuring in writers who do use "I" or "he" and the past tense. These forms apparently give us much more freedom to decide how far we will identify ourselves imaginatively and emotionally with something happening to other selves in other times and places. But there are still restrictions set by what it is easy or difficult for a novelist to do.

Easiest to represent in a novel are external objects in all their objecthood, and in their physical relations to each other and to us: a palm in a glass of holy water by a dead baby's crib; sand with glints of gold in it lifted from a river bed. Next are the simpler "universal" experiences, especially those of childhood, the kind that provide most of the events of *The Opoponax*. Minimal reference to their externals is enough to evoke our own remembered emotions. They flow in to fill the spaces left by the author's fashionable refusal to "psychologize," to elaborate states of consciousness for her characters. Finally there are the conventional sensibilities, the sympathies, the acceptances and rejections that the serious reader expects to find in a humane novel, and that he has been trained to respond to by most of the novels which he has read. Compared to the wide range of what can be externally reported or imagined as action, these inner responses tend to be highly limited and conventionalized. This is especially true of moralizing novels and novels of sensibility.

Only by going far beyond these readily invoked attitudes can we try to imagine what it would be like to be some of the characters described in Morris Samuel's *Blood Accusation,* to be Vera Cheberyak or the priest Pranaitis or the revolutionary Karayev or any of the high government officials who were determined to please the Czar by getting the Jew Beiliss convicted of ritual murder, though most of them knew that the real killer was probably Vera Cheberyak.

Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* tried to penetrate imaginatively two much simpler characters outside the usual range of novelistic sympathy or identity. Jean Gênet could convey something of his real criminality or perversity, but only after he had become an artist and after he had developed—or Sartre had developed for him—a self-justifying ideology. The unimaginable humans turned up in Samuel's book are no artists and where they have ideologies they conceal their acts or true thoughts in order to defend that ideology. They have neither the capacity for communicating the quality of their inner experiences, nor an interest in doing so. How can they be known?

They are, of course, "real" people, living in history, and quite distinct from fictional characters, even when those characters are based on them. We know too that an author is not his characters, nor can the reader become them, even when he imagines himself to do so. But these distinctions cannot be as absolute as dogmatic criticism some-

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times makes them. If they held absolutely while novels were being read and written, the truth and passion and illusion that makes fiction both art and more than art could not occur.

By coincidence Samuel's book appeared at the same time as Bernard Malamud's novel *The Fixer,* which is clearly based on the Beiliss case. Malamud had Dreyfus in mind, too, and Sacco and Vanzetti just a little. He has invented and altered significantly. But where externals are concerned, he has been surprisingly faithful not only to the larger political circumstances of the case in Russia, in Kiev at that time, but faithful to more intimate details, the name Zhenya, the arrangement of the brick yard, the blinding of a lover. Malamud seems to want to impress on us the fact that though this is a work of the imagination, history or reality provided the *imaginata,* the facts to imagine.

Malamud's changes or additions are of two kinds. Sometimes, more appropriately to the drama than the novel, events are compressed for unity and direct confrontation. Quite improbably the police questioning of the character like Vera Cheberyak is carried on in her house in the presence of the character, Yakov Bok, who plays the role of Mendel Beiliss. But most of the changes are intended to make the consciousness of Mendel Beiliss more accessible to us or rather, since nothing is known of his consciousness, to let our own characteristic responses to things take the place of his.

To this end there is great emphasis on the objectively physical, on the collapse, for instance, of the wagon in which Yakov is trying to make his way to Kiev from the *shtetl* where he had lived. That he is a "fixer," an odd-jobs repair man, makes the emphasis more appropriate. But it is after he is in the prison cell, solitary, often in irons, everything taken away from him, that the physical becomes so overwhelmingly important for Yakov—every gleam of sunlight, every splinter of wood, every fragment of paper with a word or two printed on it. There is the same sharp focus as in the Wittig novel, though the given reasons are so different.

Strong feelings from our childhood attach particularly to the bodily humiliations which Yakov suffers—the frequent, unnecessary rectal searches, the wretched, possibly poisoned food, the revolting toilet arrangements, the unpredictable attacks by warders and fellow prisoners. The officials who visit Yakov's cell have the arbitrary power over him that parents have over a child, except that there is no love. Describing Yakov's uncertainty and isolation, Malamud falls into the style of the Wittig novel:

> You wait. You wait in minutes of hope and days of hopelessness. Sometimes you just wait, there's no greater insult. You sink into your thoughts and try to blot out the prison cell. . . . Today there's a little carpentering job. You work up a sweat sawing wood apart and hammering it together.

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The real Mendel Beiliss was the industrious, moderately successful father of five children, well-liked, unreligious, conventional and unspeculative in his ideas. Yakov Bok is very different. His wife, whom he unlovingly blamed for her childlessness, has left him; he is an alienated, unprivileged, unlucky man who has made many mistakes. One of these was to go, at her invitation, to the bedroom of the crippled daughter of his rich reactionary employer. The room is perfumed. A Pekingese lies on the bed. In a thoroughly novelistic scene unrelated to the real issues of the book, Yakov prepares to make love to her, then sees why he cannot, and wins her hatred.

We sympathize with his recurrent bad luck, identify ourselves with his inquiring mind, his wry humor, his reading of Spinoza, his lively thoughts about God and the Jews, his correct sentiments about politics and freedom. "There's no such thing as an unpolitical man, especially a Jew. . . . When there's no fight for it, there's no freedom." Many of these views—sympathetic though they are to us—come surprisingly from the limited, crude, often unkind man presented early in the novel. We have less the sense that they developed naturally or necessarily in Yakov than that they flowed from Malamud's mind into the emptiness of a prison cell.

Occasionally people who visit Yakov describe in summary the issues behind his detention and coming trial, but these the novel—with the prison now its sole setting—cannot dramatize. Yakov's is the only mind we enter and his concrete political imaginings are visionary. He foresees Hitler: "Overnight a madman is born who thinks Jewish blood is water. Overnight life becomes worthless." And on the way from jail to his trial he has a delusional interview with the stark-naked Czar, who pleads for understanding. With hatred, Yakov shoots him.

No one was interested in the mind of the real Mendel Beiliss, or in the quality of his experience. There was nothing to be interested in, though he bore up well under his ordeal. After his acquittal he went first to Israel, then to New York, and died forgotten.

But the Beiliss trial aroused tremendous excitement in Russia and the world, coming after the Dreyfus case, after the Revolution of 1905. A reactionary Czar and government playing the game of the pogromist Black Hundreds, were trying to use the ritual murder charge to turn the prejudices of the common people against proponents of liberal democracy. Shrewd rightist officials close to the facts saw the dangers of a case built on characters like Vera Cheberyak and the priest Panaitis. Truly revealing in Samuel's account are the number of people on all levels of society who came forward as individuals, often at great risk, to give Beiliss concrete help. Finally, most amazing of all, a jury packed with peasants, supposedly blind antisemites, acquitted Beiliss, though they still believed there had been ritual murder.

In a sense Yakov's vision was right. Within six years the Czar was

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shot. But in the prisons and labor camps of the Stalinist regime which followed, millions suffered far worse than Mendel Beiliss, and no one could speak out or lift a hand. Millions are in wretched confinement now all over the world. Sheer luck decides who gets noticed. The suffering, the consciousness of the unnoticed, so terribly real to them, is unuseful to others and therefore goes unrealized imaginatively.

The interest of the Beiliss case was in the Russian politics which created and sustained it, and in the active involvement of so many distinct minds and temperaments, some of them unimaginable to us. To all this Yakov Bok's musings and final hysteria can hardly do justice. But a universalizing purpose is served by Malamud's concentration on a jail cell in which men very unlike "you," the reader, visit such arbitrary torments and humiliations on a man who, so reduced and limited, can more easily be "you" the reader. Jail symbolizes a now small world of multiple barriers and kinds of confinement in which some men impose extreme limitations on the lives of other men, occasionally with active cruelty, more often with the cruelty of indifference. It is a world in which a strange complex of customs, science, greed, ideology, overpopulation and historical chance determines so apparently arbitrarily who shall gorge and who shall starve, whom we should be polite to and whom we should kill, determines when something written on paper can carry a man in luxury through a dozen countries, when something on another paper can send him to an ignored and ignoble death. This is a complex which novelists ideally should be best equipped to understand.

Food and barriers announce themselves immediately at the beginning of *Tremor of Intent, an Eschatological Spy Novel* by Anthony Burgess. A British agent, Hillier, plagued by "my two chronic diseases of gluttony and satyriasis," travels incognito on a gastronomic cruise. When the ship reaches a Black Sea port, he will kidnap Roper, an old friend of his, a scientist who has defected to the Soviet Union. Gluttony leads Roper into an absurd and disastrous eating wager with a giant named Theodorescu. The luxury dishes, subsequently vomited into the sea, Burgess describes in loving detail. Theodorescu, who now has Hillier in his power, is an Ian Fleming villain operating his own international secret-selling service.

The satyriasis exceeds the gluttony. Earlier Hillier had tried some stormy Wagnerian sex with Brigitte, the Nazi wife who had corrupted Roper and whom Hillier despises. Next Devi, Theodorescu's confederate, skillfully teaches him all the delights to be achieved by the techniques (given fancy names but not described) of the Hindu love manuals. Finally, in effect incestuously, at the moment of her father's death, Hillier initiates Clara, a young American girl. She has sex in the head from intensive reading of psychopathology, but has never known it in the body. For good measure, Theodorescu corrupts pederastically Clara's young quiz-kid brother, who long ago had spotted Hillier as a spy. The sex scenes are quite unserious.

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The triteness of their hyperbolics is hardly concealed by the skill and economy of Burgess's writing.

Sex, like eating, entraps Hillier. An injection Devi gives him while making love subjects Hillier to humiliations at Theodorescu's hands very like those suffered by Yakov Bok. In the end, of course, after all the usual plot paraphernalia of the spy thriller—disguises, concealed bodies, dependence on guns in which blanks have secretely been inserted, philosophical conversations with a man you are about to kill—Hillier out-hypodermicizes Theodorescu in Istanbul and drowns him. Roper has to be left behind.

The first part of *Tremor of Intent* is an imaginary letter to "you," to a government superior, explaining why Hillier hated the Nazis but also hated the vile deeds he had to commit, as British agent, against the communists. Toward the end, excerpts from Roper's journal explain how he was betrayed by Brigitte and a high British official in a kind of Profumo affair. In the last scene, meeting Clara and her brother in a Dublin hotel, Hillier has suddenly become a priest. Ian Fleming turns into Graham Greene.

Tremor of Intent combines immediate erotic and sadistic action of a totally uncommitted, daydreaming kind, with general sentiments against cruelty and betrayal that impose assent on the reader. But politically everything gets cancelled out. Religion does not complement politics; it replaces it. Hillier enters abruptly and unpersuasively a faith of which the reader has been given rather unsavory glimpses on a mostly metaphysical level. Eschatology does not figure at all.

The inner world in *Norman's Letter* by Gavin Lambert is far more destructive, and its verbal recreation is fanciful, satiric, elegant and sad. The "you" addressed by this long letter-journal is Ahmin, an Arab boy. Norman knew him only during one ecstatic night in Marrakech, left him "with a light pillow of banknotes beneath your sleeping head," and loved him ever after.

A baronet, Norman Lightwood is incredibly wealthy, but the wealth only attracts predators whom he lacks the assurance to cast off. His conception by the witty, irresponsible, endlessly self-assured Lady D. was probably illegitimate, and she upset Norman's psychic balance permanently by an enlightened use of her own lovely body to illustrate for him in boyhood the difference between the sexes. She also ruined Norman's sister, a sadistic lesbian who plays some sinister role high in the apparatus of the German Nazi party. The sister harries Norman with an anonymous letter as Brigitte did Roper. Norman's journal—which is the novel—plays a role within the novel as Roper's had done in *Tremor of Intent*. A marriage arranged by Lady D. between Norman and a young showgirl might possibly have succeeded sexually if on the wedding night the bride had not discovered the love-journal to Ahmin.

To escape the limits of his outer self and express the inner one

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Norman creates a Greek-Egyptian poetess, Oum Salem (1841-1879), whose work he translates. The Emily Dickinson of Islam, her "walled, inward life drove her to a perpetual trance of wisdom and compassion." She becomes more and more real to Norman, and sends him cryptic advice. With the aid of a sculptress and her American Indian husband, Norman builds her a huge shrine in New Mexico. Norman's will is done, his kingdom come: "The world outside is a desert island with rather more than two thousand million people stranded on it."

The shrine gets taken over, of course. Norman goes understandably mad, believes his food is being poisoned, is confined in a luxurious sanitarium, rescued by Lady D. and carried off—for what she thinks is liberation—to a curious *Liebestod.* His murdered body ends floating like Theodorescu's in the sea. Lady D. adds a postscript to the published journal. Reconciled with her Nazi daughter and working for Dr. Schweitzer, she is as assured as ever.

Are we Norman? No. Or the gay, indestructible, impervious Lady D.? Certainly we are not the Arab youth to whom all this is addressed. Yet Gavin Lambert moves so skillfully between satire and sympathy, between judgment and free fancy, that the reader has to feel things out for himself, cannot depend on accustomed projections.

He meets a similar unexpected challenge in *A Dream of Kings* by Harry Petrakis. Like Norman Lightwood, Leonidas Matsoukas draws his strength from secret imaginative resources lightly, eloquently, lyrically expressed. A Chicago Greek, a former resistance fighter, Matsoukas tries to lead the varied and inventive life proper to a free man, especially a free Greek. Through the Pindar Master Counciling Service, he promotes restaurants, writes poems, coaches wrestling, treats impotence. For all his flair, nothing succeeds. He lacks credit even for a small coffee at the local restaurant and dwells meanly in small rooms with a discouraged wife and antagonistic mother-in-law. Worst of all, his cherished small son is a defective, near to death.

Yet Matsoukas has energy to fall passionately in love with the baker's widow—firm, fresh and fragrant as the bread she bakes—and to scheme how he can carry his son off to Greece, where he is sure that the sun will restore him. Though Matsoukas defeats the dead baker's possessive spirit and triumphs sexually with his usual verve, success in bed proves a complicated and embittering failure. When his main chance to go to Greece fails, his attempt to recoup brings Matsoukas a ruined reputation and a nearly crippling beating. Like Yakov Bok, Hillier, and Norman Lightwood, he is trapped in a small room with no recourse against a man more powerful than he. But the real surprises come from wife and mother-in-law. *A Dream of Kings* had seemed to promise amused condescension toward a poetic *schlemiel,* whose unlucky attempts to improve himself were the comic counterpoint of Yakov Bok's. It turns out to deal far more immediately and convincingly with guilt than *Tremor of Intent,*

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through minds and circumstances where we are not used to encountering it.

With Wilfrid Sheed's *Office Politics,* we are back to an undemanding liberalism which could cause no reader discomfort: "radicalism without responsibility, humanism without crankiness, everything paired off with its commonsense opposite." So a New York weekly of opinion is described by George Wren, whose mind was formed by it, and who gave up a good job at C.B.S. to help edit it. His new post teaches him more about personalities than ideas, especially the personality of his boss, Gilbert Twining, a Britisher, imported ten years earlier to give the *Outsider* new life. George is terribly impressed by Twining's dress, manner and technical skill, but increasingly embarrassed by Twining's confidences. After-work meetings for a quick drink keep George repeatedly trapped in a small bar booth late in the evening when he should be home with the family.

Twining reveals his sexual insecurities and what at first seems paranoia about the loyalty of the staff. The *Outsider's* insolvency restricts it to dark, file-crowded quarters, with a tiny, balky elevator, in painful contrast to the vast luxury apartment and empty mind of its chief benefactress, Harriet Wadsworth. The tiny, low-partitioned cells keep in each other's constant sight and hearing a staff that has been together too long.

When Twining suffers a heart attack after a sexual escapade and is confined to a California hospital, revolt does break out, signalized not by intellectual or political dissent, but such matters as new green paint in the office, costly rich luncheons at the magazine's expense, and an attempt to bribe Harriet by letting her write drama reviews. After a strange silence, Twining pulls himself together, recovers his identity, and in a rather too dramatically arranged sequence faces down his opponents one by one in their homes.

Watching the moves and maneuverings is fun, but gets us nowhere. We look through George like a pane of glass, with his predictable sympathies and uncertainties cleverly but all too carefully explained to us. *Office Politics* is a fine example of graceful, knowledgeable craftsmanship, close to the reader's professional interests—we all eat lunches, have colleagues, are oppressed by their lesser traits, usually work confined in too small space—but in the terms I have been setting forth, it offers nothing novelistically because it demands nothing, either of reader or writer.

Fiction at its most exciting is a sort of psychic karate match going on in the dark between author and reader, neither player seeing the other. What is seen is the imagined world between. At its best the illusion is so persuasive that the reader does not think to ask how the author knows—or *if* he knows—the facts with which he builds. The author lures the consciousness consentingly out of the self, but when it returns, it is surprised and educated by having to find its way back through another gate than the one it left.

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HERBERT LEIBOWITZ

A Lost World Redeemed

IN ALMOST EVERY EPOCH OF HER HISTORY, Judaism has been remarkably tolerant of her rebellious children. Unlike the church, she has not conducted inquisitions to root out heresy. For despite the long-established principle, perhaps best enunciated by Simeon the Just in the *Ethics of the Fathers,* that "upon three things the world standeth; upon Torah, upon worship, and upon the showing of kindness," a Jew remains a Jew even if he throws down the first two pillars of the faith, so long as he leads a just and righteous life. It is no easy thing for the emancipated Jew to overturn a tradition that has been tested in the crucible of adversity and has survived virtually intact. He undergoes a second experience of diaspora. But some basic spiritual connection with his people remains undisturbed; their actions, sayings, and life style are enshrined in his memory, as Isaac Bashevis Singer's fine memoir, *In My Father's Court,* so strikingly proves.[1]

Singer represents a singular Jewish type. Skeptical of the casuistries of Jewish law and no longer observing ritual practices, he yet feels a powerful homesickness for the community that he has rejected. With Wordsworthian mellowness, the mature man looks back affectionately at the young boy's journey from belief to doubt, and recollects the people and episodes that formed his character and colored his iconoclasm—and that provided the materials and tonality of his fiction. But above all, *In My Father's Court* is a poignant document of a living culture that, nourished from within by its joyous obedience to the law, was extinguished in Hitler's crematoria. By a sad paradox these reminiscent sketches, originally published in the *Jewish Daily Forward,* were written in a language that is read today by a tiny audience.

At the turn of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe, the Jew lived, as he had for millennia, by his faith in Torah, the code of law set down once and for all time by God in a revelation at Sinai and reinforced by generations of Rabbinic interpretation. Surrounded by enemies and depending on the unreliable mercy of unfriendly governments, the community trusted itself to God's mercy and the shield of piety. Religious devoutness and religious duty shared a common goal: to teach a man how to act well; injustice was considered an affront to man's reason for living. The authority of the law was invested in large part in the Rabbi, whose influence pervaded every corner of the community. Whether in the city of Warsaw or in the *shtetl* of Bilgoray, the Rabbi was an absolute monarch, the head of an unlegislated dyn-

[1] IN MY FATHER'S COURT, by *Isaac Bashevis Singer.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $5.50.

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asty, a cynosure of virtue, holiness, and learning—he was on occasion an ignoramus—without a standing army but with a militantly faithful following: courtiers, servants, hangers-on, fervent disciples. (There were too many courts and too many Rabbis, Singer notes, as though the original twelve tribes of Israel had proliferated to twelve thousand.) The Rabbi would arrange marriages, preach homilies, settle disputes; and especially for his Hasidic flock, he was also a miracle worker who, by reciting the proper Cabalistic incantations or by the charisma of his personality or the laying on of hands could cure a woman's barrenness or purify the defiled. The *Zohar* became almost as sacred a text as the Pentateuch or the Talmud. Irrationalism sprang up in the soil of a pedantic legalism, and the ordinary was imbued with mystery: reports of visionary wonders, such as the dead re-visiting earth to express their approval or disapproval of the conduct of the living, were commonplace.

The life Singer witnessed at his father's court was unique and variegated. Although the people lived strictly by the letter of the law, that letter accommodated an extraordinary range of character, permitted unexpected excrescences of behavior, obsessions, quirks; like the bookseller, convinced he was dying, who came yearly to amend his will until he had accumulated a thick volume of directives that would have required the services of several burial societies to fulfill—and who died in ripe old age. Singer evokes with charm and humor the life crammed into Krochmalna Street in Warsaw. The grocers and bakers, criminals and litigants and giggling women, the cadgers and renegade Jews who passed before his curious eyes, acting out their desperate, or foolish, or selfless destinies, constitute a gallery of Dickensian characters, belovedly grotesque but drawn in the round, who magically speak to the old man as they did to the young boy. What we have taken to be the flights of inventive fantasy in the tales and *Satan in Goray* frequently turn out to be literal fact.

One of the intriguing paradoxes of *In My Father's Court* is how in the "stronghold of Jewish Puritanism, where the body was looked upon as a mere appendage to the soul," a veritable *comédie humaine* thrived. The sights and sounds and smells of his childhood, like the smell of freshly baked Sabbath bread, are as present to Singer in all their tantalizing immediacy as the toil and gossip, the tribal snobberies and petty squabbles, the air of festive exaltation. The key signatures of this world were law and piety. Singer catches the Jewish gift for factionalism and its delight in polemic, in the minutiae of controversy. It was a community in which even the laity was expert at dialectic and matched wits with its Rabbi; indeed it was recreation for them, as sports and chess are for other peoples.

And how many different kinds of piety! Old jolly piety; wizened, sallow piety; the serene piety of Reb Berele and Reb Asher the Dairyman, who led unspotted lives and died happily, and whose enthusi-

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astic faith neither hunger, unemployment, cold and sickness, nor even a silent God could dim; and, finally, the comic, exhorting piety of Reb Moshe Ba-Ba-Ba (so called because he ended every sentence with Ba-Ba-Ba), who, every time he wished to pass into Singer's house, had to run a gauntlet of insolent, buxom women, whose levity (showing him a large expanse of thigh) threatened to lure him to Gehenna. "Being a devout Jew" with a full-time occupation. In paying tribute to these people who "lived in sanctity and died as martyrs," Singer writes with a moving, understated sorrow, a bitterly laconic pain.

The most commodious heart of this ghetto world, its hero, is Singer's father. Scholar, mystic, dreamer, aspiring to be a saint, he presides fearfully over the Beth Din, doing combat with ignorance, dishonesty, and all the species of human chaos. "The concept behind the Beth Din," Singer explains, "is that there can be no justice without godliness, and that the best judgment is one accepted by all litigants with good will and trust in divine power." Its opposite is force. Against the ever-intrusive perils of turmoil, novelty, and injustice, the tyranny of unreason, his father takes refuge in the safety of prayer and study, in ethical purity.

He barricades himself in his house, which becomes synagogue, study hall, and courtroom; he binds the law around him like phylacteries; but he cannot bar disorder. He dreads every knock on the door, for it may signal the entrance of a ragged, bereaved man asking eerily whether he may sleep with his dead wife (to save her body from rats), or otherwise bring the grubby facts of life into the peace and warmth of his home. The bizarre and impossible materialize before his eyes and must somehow be dealt with; and although he consults his books and finds the appropriate Biblical passage or Rabbinic precedent, and his quixotic faith in divine goodness does not falter, human effort seems as frail as the goose quill pen with which he inscribes his documents.

No wonder, then, that when God seemed to withdraw his protection, and piety was no armor against persecution, Jews like Singer's father longed for Messiah to come and justify their suffering and sweep aside the wicked (Singer tells of one Rabbi who slept with his clothes on so that if Messiah came at night, he would not have to waste time dressing). At the in-gathering of souls virtue would be rewarded with the perfected harmony of Paradise. This eschatological comfort had outlasted Israel's foes; there was no way of knowing that the Evil One was perched on their doorposts.

For Singer's elders it was axiomatic that "the 'world' itself was *tref*" (unclean); the temptations of modernism—Gentile clothes, books and ideas, visits to spas, ideologies like Zionism and Socialism—had to be fought off. A considerable Hebrew and Yiddish secular literature existed, but Singer's father simply refused to recognize it, dismissing it as

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signifying nothing. He was, however, fighting a lost cause: the Enlightenment had reached even into such a previously inaccessible *shtetl* as Bilgoray, where Singer's grandfather had once singlehandedly routed a theatrical company and its "pagan" sponsors. And secularism invaded the family household. Impatient with the aridities of Talmud, its interminable haggling over minor points ("The world goes to pieces and they still ponder the egg laid on a holiday"), Singer's older brother, I. J. Singer, the author of *The Brothers Ashkenazi,* breached the fences around the Torah and abandoned Orthodoxy, becoming painter, writer, and free-thinker. To his parents, such apostasy was a blow from which they did not recover, for the community lost strength, suffered a shrinking of morale. His father's response, when he did not merely wring his hands in despair, was to shout at his son, "Unbeliever! Enemy of Judaism!" whereas his mother engaged her errant son in philosophic arguments. (Descended from a family of Rabbis, more patrician and illustrious than her husband's, she was learned in her own right.)

His brother's rebellion was crucial for the young Singer, not only because it gave him somebody to emulate, but because it opened up new (and forbidden) worlds; he discussed with his brother such subjects as free will, politics, and *Crime and Punishment.* Two boyhood adventures had forecast his eventual departure from the shelter of his parents' faith and his discovery of otherness: an excursion to the countryside outside Warsaw to see the wild cows, and a day spent riding the boulevards of Warsaw on a *droshky,* dressed in his gabardine with his earlocks flapping in the wind, gorging himself on sweets, and returning to the confines of the ghetto feeling sheepish and guilty. His lifelong fascination with sexuality seems to have originated in his observations of his brother's Bohemian circle of friends. Posing for these artists one day, he learned that "there was more to a boy than the ability to study"; their drawing made him look like "something I might become some day, or have been in a former existence." He grows a new self. But what Singer writes of his brother becomes true of himself later: "he had deserted the old, but there was nothing in the new that he could call his own." The two brothers became that familiar figure in the modern landscape (and in Singer's fiction): the spiritual outlander, the man whose soul is the battleground for a war between the sacred and the profane, the erotic and the ascetic. *In My Father's Court* fills out the story for us, tracing the pattern of exile and partial return in the palimpsest of Singer's mind.

The last third of the book is devoted to Singer's trip with his mother to Bilgoray during the worst years of World War I. On the train ride from Warsaw, "Bilgoray symbolized the coming of the Messiah, the miraculous," but it more truly marked Singer's transit into a different future. For while Singer says that "In this world of old Jewishness I found a spiritual treasure trove. I had a chance to see our past as it

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really was. Time seemed to flow backwards. I lived Jewish history," it is also true that "its immutability was being penetrated from many sources." The shot at Sarajevo had permanently altered the life of Eastern Europe for Jew and Gentile alike. These pages distill the hearty spirit of a culture once flourishing but now waning, and Singer pays handsome homage to its humanity and eccentricities, the flavor of its family life, the love and zeal that attached the Jew to his faith without need of proof. But his chief intoxication comes from tasting and testing new powers, risking the wrath of public opinion in his mother's family and the Hasidic camp. His is an idyl amid violence. He indulges his love of Nature (in Judaism, Nature is usually edifying, worth praise only as God's creation). He takes his first steps to intellectual independence: the writer is born.

The destruction of any culture is an occasion for mourning, a catastrophe to the entire human family. *In My Father's Court,* a flower of art growing, as it were, from the ashes of that magnificent past, is an act of imaginative piety. And piety, which etymologically is derived from pity, is the radiant quality of his ancestors that, by the divine laws of art, Isaac Bashevis Singer rescues from extinction.

J. MITCHELL MORSE

Where Is Everybody?[1]

THERE REALLY ARE HOUYHNHNMS. Think of Woodrow Wilson. Think of Virginia Woolf. Think what might have resulted if those two had got together. But there aren't many such thoroughbred specimens, and the writing of fiction about Houyhnhnms has declined. That is a pity, because there is so much current fiction about Yahoos, and about

1 REMEMBRANCE DAY, by *Gerhard Zwerenz.* Dutton. $3.95. ATTENDANCE LIST FOR A FUNERAL, by *Alexander Kluge.* McGraw-Hill. $4.95. FEVER, by *J. M. G. Le Clézio.* Atheneum. $4.95. AN HOUR AFTER REQUIEM, by *Lawrence O'Sullivan.* Doubleday. $4.50. BLACK ANGELS by *Bruce Jay Friedman.* Simon and Schuster. $4.50. THE ILLUSIONLESS MAN, by *Allen Wheelis.* Norton. $4.50. THE HAPPY MARRIAGE, by *R. V. Cassill.* Purdue University. $3.50. THE GIRL IN THE BLACK RAINCOAT, edited by *George Garrett.* Duell, Sloan & Pearce. $5.95. TALES FROM MODERN INDIA, edited by K. Natwar-Singh. Macmillan. $6.95. DEATH IN MIDSUMMER, by *Yukio Mishima.* New Directions. $5.50. THE GOLD IN THE SEA, by *Brian Friel.* Doubleday. $4.50. TWO TALES, by *S. Y. Agnon.* Schocken. $4.95. FIVE WOMEN, by *Robert Musil.* Delacorte. $5.00. STRANGERS AND GRAVES, by *Peter S. Feibleman.* Atheneum. $5.95. SUMMERING, by *Joanne Greenberg.* Holt, Rinehart & Winston. $4.95. THE MUSIC SCHOOL, by *John Updike.* Knopf. $4.95.

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other unpleasant beasts that alas are not fabulous. Contemporary literature is full of squonks, for example. The squonk (*lacrimocorpus dissolvens*) is easy to track because it leaves a trail of tears, but hard to capture because when you touch it it dissolves in tears and there you are with your hand in a puddle. The wail of the goofang is also heard in the land, as he walks backwards so that the tears that ceaselessly flow from his eyes will not flow back in; many authors write books about the nisnas, who has half a face, half a body, half a mind and half a heart; and there are more and more bonacons nowadays. The bonacon escapes its enemies by evacuating copiously and overwhelming them with acres of excrement six feet deep. When I pick up a current novel or play I often find myself surrounded by squonks, goofangs, nisnasses and bonacons, together with a few priggish Houyhnhnms who, unlike Woodrow Wilson and Virginia Woolf, are merely inhuman; and the question naturally arises, Where are the people I know? Where is everybody?

To us more or less human readers who enjoy recognizing ourselves, our relatives, our friends, enemies, colleagues and acquaintances in fiction, collections of short stories are often more convincing. Here we stand a good chance of seeing people who were born with or have acquired some decent impulses and often act on them quite naturally, without sidelong glances at the mirror or the witnesses, if any; people who, though not heroic, are not always sniveling; who, though not artists, are not Babbitts; and, though not saints, are not disembowellers or necrophiliacs or coprophagists or racists. Why this should be so—why the contemporary short story should be less often misanthropic than the contemporary novel or drama—I don't know and won't conjecture here; but of the sixteen books before me, only five deal predominantly with types who are innately depraved. Let us take the sixteen in ascending order of good temper.

The first two are by remorseful Germans: *Remembrance Day,* by Gerhard Zwerenz, and *Attendance List for a Funeral,* by Alexander Kluge. Zwerenz, an ex-Nazi and an ex-post-war Communist People's Policeman, calls his stories, poems and sketches "Thirteen Attempts in Prose to Adopt an Attitude of Respect." One tells how a Nazi sniper, whose only war aims are to survive and to lengthen the row of notches on his rifle, survives by digging his slit trenches deeper than anyone else's and improving each with an L-shaped lateral tunnel; and how he finally tunnels under a mass grave and is buried alive. I find it impossible to adopt an attitude of respect toward him. Another tells how a Nazi soldier is taken prisoner on the Russian front, and in gratitude for not being killed sings a Russian patriotic song. I find it impossible to adopt an attitude of respect toward him. Another tells how an ex-Nazi soldier, now a People's Policeman in East Germany, returns to his native town, arrests his best friend as a war criminal, and then resigns in disgust. I find it impossible to adopt an attitude of respect

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toward him. Etc., etc. All these are stories of sentimental misanthropy, tender self-disgust, and weeping condescension toward the human race. They are preceded by a St. Sulpician poem about Hope, mighty sister, mighty mistress, mighty mother; they end with a prose poem, "Creation," of which this is a fair sample: "I want a gentle world. . . . I want a fatherland for no hostile purpose. I want a fatherland that would be like a father and a real father with a lot of friendly brothers. I want unbetrayed mothers. I want gentle people." . . . Etc., etc. . . . "The realm of dreams is the realm of freedom." This reads like something straight out of that sweet magazine *Ideals,* or like a prize-winning Brotherhood Week oration at Grenada, Miss., High; its tone is evidently just right, at the moment, for an ex-Nazi ex-Communist-policeman living in West Germany.

Alexander Kluge's tone is much clearer. He was twelve or thirteen years old when World War II ended. He is now a lawyer, and his stories take the form of case histories. Some of them are true, he says. In my childhood there was a magazine, *Plain Talk,* that published in each issue a ridiculous life history made up of brief news items. One, entitled "The Good Fellow," presented a schlemiel who in his teens got pneumonia after being chained to a tombstone all through a Winter night as part of a fraternity initiation; in his twenties ate his hat after losing a bet on an election; in his thirties broke an ankle in a sack race; in his forties pushed a peanut around the block with his nose after losing a bet on the World Series, and in his fifties died of indigestion after winning a pie-eating contest. He was a victim of the clichés he lived by. If his mindless yea-saying had injured others as well as, or instead of, himself, he might have been one of Kluge's Germans. These people seem doomed to moral ineptitude; morally, everything they do turns out wrong; morally, they seem to be an inferior race. There is a terrible grim innocence about them: they blunder like moral schlemiels into crime after crime after crime, and ask us to understand that they could not have done otherwise. The life story of E. Schinke, a non-Nazi philologist who in return for academic favors cooperated with the Nazis as long as he was permitted to, was punctuated with the refrain, "What else could he have done?" Manfred Schmidt, having taken all the required steps for a legal separation from his wife, was surprised when the separation was an accomplished fact: "You become entangled with guilt. But what else can you do?" Mandorf, a secretly liberal political economist at the University of Freiburg during Heidegger's presidency, joined the Nazi party and did its work because, "unsupported by events," his liberal personality "could not unfold." Lieutenant Rudolf Boulanger, who was assigned to tour prisoner-of-war camps and collect "craniums of Jewish-Bolshevist commissars for purposes of scientific investigation at the Reich University of Strasbourg," was careful to kill the victims in a way that would not mutilate the heads. No shooting. After some initial doubts,

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he concluded that the coolness toward him of the regular executioners, who considered his special mission incompatible with an officer's honor, was "not valid," because . . . And besides, "there was no overlooking the fact that the connection with the academic world, even if only as an agent, had advantages of a prestige nature." After the war he became a Marxist: "There was nothing one could do. He said he had been infected, as it were, by his enemies."

Kluge lives on a much higher level than Zwerenz; he makes no phony efforts to respect those who don't respect themselves, and his fine scorn is very fine indeed. Of the five misanthropic books, his is the only one that in literary terms is a pleasure to read. The life story of Mandorf in particular, with its scholarly footnotes, is a little masterpiece. So is "An Experiment in Love," whose ironic last sentence tells us more about authoritarian incomprehension than all of Adorno.

Misanthropy and sloppy prose make a bad combination. William James says the essence of plebeianism in discourse is a mania for completeness, a need to express every step, an inability to omit any detail or to sum up or generalize or have done. Such meticulosity is especially tiresome when it has to do with the speaker's symptoms, or his metaphysical cosmology, or why he has this hang-up, or this thing about you know? In these terms, J. M. G. Le Clézio is a plebeian of plebeians. All his characters are much like Thomas Hinde's Happy Larry and R. V. Cassill's Poor Harold. They have these hang-ups, you know? They have this thing about . . . ah, ferget it. They call up strangers at four o'clock in the morning and talk about their symptoms and their newly discovered philosophical clichés. This nineteen-fiftyish maundering sometimes rises into imitations of *Nausea* (1938) and *Nadja* (1928), both of which owed their best moments to the inimitable *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910). Le Clézio is a phony, an imitator of second-rate and third-rate fashionable novels that once were avant-garde, a vendor of old experiments to the new generation. His pretentious incompetence offers nothing to compare with Roquentin's black root, much less with Malte's cannister lid. His foreword is embarrassing in its stale naiveté. Writing a book like *Fever* and sending it to a publisher is the literary equivalent of nailing two pieces of scrap lumber hastily together, spilling some paint on them, and sending them to an art gallery. The fact that such things are accepted for exhibition and sale indicates only that the market now includes a lot of people who don't even know what they like.

Lawrence O'Sullivan doesn't imitate Sartre. Sometimes he imitates Joyce. Most of the time he tries to write in a style of his own, but it doesn't work because he hasn't got an adequate command of language. He says "epitome" for "acme," "pallet" for "palette," and "bereave" for "mourn": he would have us believe that the readers of *The New York Post* "bereave" a sports columnist gone over to the *Journal-American*. "Savage thoughts ate into his search for direction," he says.

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Have you ever seen a thought eating into a search? "The smoke was densening," he says. "The lieutenant slumped back behind the protection of the rock. And scrambled for thought." "A bullet screamed over his head and jettisoned his field cap." The result of such inaccuracies of vocabulary is a ridiculous cheapness of style that degrades his characters. How can a man be a hero when the smoke is densening? When instead of slumping behind a rock he slumps behind its protection? When he scrambles for thought? When his cap gets jettisoned off his head? And when, back in civilian life, he is mistaken for a slob not only by other characters in the story but also by the reader? The reader makes the mistake because the hero's thoughts and acts are those of a slob. They aren't intended to be, but they are: because the language that constitutes them is the language of a slob. Let's come right out and say it: in terms of language, O'Sullivan is a slob. The alleged passion and distress of the lovers in the title story cannot be taken seriously, because in cheap language there is no passion or distress; the alleged ironic intelligence of the whore's customer in "Madonna and Metronome" cannot be taken seriously, because in cheap language there is no irony or intelligence; even the alleged stupidity of the naive liberal in the last story, "In the Eyes of Jesus Rosado," seems unreal, because the author's intention is fouled up by the language of his ineptitude. The naiveté of Leopold Bloom is expressed by the language in which he speaks, thinks and feels; but that is Bloom's language, not Joyce's. O'Sullivan, having no such control, reveals in all his stories an unconscious misanthropy which he undoubtedly thinks is compassion. "Ever in step with the young lovers had scurried the Fates, giggling," he says. What kind of Fates can these be? Then what kind of lovers can those be? All are degraded. To write badly is to hate mankind. How do you scurry in step with people who are not scurrying, anyhow?

Bruce Jay Friedman, who either coined the term "black humor" or at least holds the American rights in it, is much cleverer than O'Sullivan and much more consciously cheap. O'Sullivan is an earnest amateur; Friedman is a cynical pro. His idiom is a contemptuous wisecracking patter. He snows the marks, who don't realize that the contempt includes them. He is slick, slick, slick. Here's a paragraph from "The Investor," a story about a man whose temperature follows the fluctuations of Plimpton Rocket Fuels on the stock market. The hospital staff, bewildered, has prevailed on its chief to call in a specialist from Rochester:

> "I'll tell you frankly," the resident doctor said to him, "I didn't want to go out of the house." He was a nervous middle-aged man, not technically bald but with patches of hair scattered carelessly about his head. "We've done a pile of work on him and I say if you don't have a specialist in the house, you're not a hospital. But it *is* a baffler and everyone kept saying bring in Rochester and I do agree

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> you get freshness when you go outside. Keep going outside though and you're not a hospital. In any case, the house has done it all, Doctor. Blood, intestines, heart, neurological. We don't get a sign of anything. Come over and have a look to at the bugger. He hasn't moved a muscle in a week."

That is very good fast wacky talk. It doesn't pretend to be anything else. Friedman doesn't aim high. He fully achieves his low ambition. He isn't satirizing the medical profession or anything else, he's just being generally contemptuous. Reading these stories, we can easily see why he is in what *Esquire* some time ago called "the hot center" of literary importance. All but one of them have previously appeared in such magazines as *Esquire, Playboy, Cavalier, The Gentlemen's Quarterly* and *The Saturday Evening Post.* The new one, "Let Me See Faces," perhaps reserved as a come-on for the book, could easily have been published in—well, guess:

> Now come on, you dirty guy. I'm not about to fall for that phony back-rub stuff, either. Not at this stage of the game. I like a dirty guy, though. Others you have to teach the facts of life. Now, tell me about your marriage. Troubles, eh? That's stupid, otherwise what would you be doing here. What's it like after twelve years? I can just about imagine. That's why I get the quick-and-violent trade. I'll bet you've got to use plenty of gimmicks to keep it going. Well-l-l-l, that's your problem, Mr. John Q. Bananas. You stay after me a week, two weeks, a month, then we'll see. Look, I can get plenty of *single* men.

Condescension, that blander nuance of contempt, is Allen Wheelis' tone. He is a psychiatrist, and he seems to be trying to help us pull ourselves together. He looks kindly down on the human race; I think he wouldn't forbid his daughter to marry one of us, though naturally he would worry about the difficulties she'd be letting herself in for. His title story is a fairy tale about the married life of a man of absolute skepticism and a woman of absolute faith, and how after many years the man changed somewhat: "in all that he did he could see himself striving toward a condition of beauty or truth or goodness or love that did not exist, but whereas earlier in his life he had always said, 'It's an illusion,' and turned away, now he said, 'There isn't anything else,' and stayed with it." This easy *als-ob*-ism seems to be the medicine Wheelis dispenses as a psychiatrist. It gives me a chill. "The League of Death," a fantasy about a man who discovers the life-enhancing value of keeping clearly in our minds the possibility that we may die at any moment, who preaches this gospel to the world, and in the process of developing its implications falls in love with death and madness, is pretentious and boring in the way that all science fiction is pretentious and boring. The other two stories are much better. "Sea Girls" deals quite perceptively with the inner life of a middle-aged

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married man; and "The Signal," which recounts the fortunes of a writer who writes fortunes for Chinese fortune cookies, is delightfully funny.

In addition to the four stories, *The Illusionless Man* includes two essays. Many contemporary writers—C. P. Snow, James Baldwin, Mary McCarthy, Edmund Wilson and Helen Waddell, for example—write excellent expository prose but fall to pieces when they write fiction. Wheelis is better at fiction than at exposition.

R. V. Cassill's *The Happy Marriage* is a very uneven collection. The title story is full of phony poetry, "The Swimmers at Pallikula" is a brave attempt that fails for lack of language, "The Covenant" might be by Booth Tarkington out of *The Three Faces of Eve,* and "The War in the Air" is an abject superstitious thing that combines the intellectual clarity of science fiction with the moral sensitivity of *True Confessions;* but "The First Day of School" is a simple, quiet, skin-prickling story of two Negro children's setting out for school in a town full of sick white trash, and "The Sunday Painter," which appeared in *Esquire,* is a remarkably good contemporary American version of the Tonio-Kröger-Death-in-Venice theme. Of course Cassill is not as good as Thomas Mann; but on the other hand, he spares us the elements that Mann took from Gobineau, so that his story is free of the greater writer's superstition; and in our time that is an improvement not to be underrated.

The two anthologies before me are widely different in every respect. George Garrett's *The Girl in the Black Raincoat* is a shameless bit of gimmickry; K. Natwar-Singh's *Tales from Modern India* is a serious effort to present some of the best work of India's best writers during the last hundred years.

Garrett, who teaches creative writing at the University of Virginia, had a talented girl student who wore a black raincoat and had to leave school; one of her classmates then wrote a story about her, some of the others protested that that was a rather tasteless thing to do, and in order to show them that such considerations were irrelevant in literary terms, Garrett "put the whole class to work writing stories and poems about girls in black raincoats." Well, all right, I guess. Chekhov, on a bet, once wrote a story about an ashtray. But even so, what an assignment! Of course the subject has nothing to do with the quality of the work, but still, there are subjects and subjects, and to assign a whole class, in Virginia, in 1965 or '66, to write about something so harmless, is to be frivolous in the head—and in the heart. However, as the word spread around the campus, friends of Garrett's who were not in the class began sending him stories about girls in black raincoats, and then other friends on other campuses got the word somehow, and then Garrett began asking established writers to play the game, and pretty soon he had a book. Leslie Fiedler contributed. Robie Macauley (now with *Playboy*) contributed. William Peden con-

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tributed. John O'Hara declined, briefly; John Updike declined, tactfully; Philip Roth and Reynolds Price declined, regretfully. Good for them. What we have here is a collection of cheap stories and pretentious poems: a particularly blatant product of the Qual. Lit. Biz.

Natwar-Singh's anthology is something else again. The stories deal with the relations between Indian subordinates and British masters, between Indians of different castes, between landlords and peasants, between Indians who resist the twentieth century and those who welcome it, between ascetics and business men. In subject matter and psychological interest, and even in terms of literary competence, it far surpasses *The Girl.* It is worthy of a reader's time.

Yukio Mishima, in *Death in Midsummer,* deals with some of the same problems in contemporary Japan. His title story is not specifically Japanese. It tells of the feelings of a young couple whose six-year-old son and five-year-old daughter drown in the sea at a Summer resort. Their grief, guilt, shame, emotional paralysis, and gradual recovery of normal responses to the pleasures of living are developed with fine sensitivity, in terms of concrete situations; this is therefore an excellent story regardless of its setting. Of the other stories, six are protests against the westernization of Japanese manners, morals, business methods, architecture, home furnishings, etc.; one deals with the life and work of kabuki theater people; one, ridiculously solemn and didactic, deals with the ceremonial suicide of an army officer and his wife during a mutiny in 1937; and one, which seems to be either a traditional story or a story in the traditional manner, tells how a Buddhist priest overcame the temptation he suffered as a result of seeing the Great Imperial Concubine. Seen through these stories, twentieth-century Japan seems more remote and incomprehensible than nineteenth-century India or even than traditional Japan; the psychological reasons would seem to be simple enough; in any case, the stories are worked out with exquisite art—except the one about the soldier and his wife, which seems to be the result of a special kind of westernization: the influence of the Hollywood recruiting film.

Brian Friel's *The Gold in the Sea* makes Ireland seem almost as strange as Japan—but no matter, these are jolly stories, full of fun and cantankerous life, and the characters are not stage Irishmen. Recommended.

S. Y. Agnon's two novellas both deal with life in modern Israel, but they have very little in common. The first, "Betrothed," tells how a brilliant young biologist, who has been invited to teach in America, is visited in the midst of his preparations for the trip by his lifelong friend and patron, who has financed his education—and by the patron's daughter, to whom in early childhood he had plighted his troth in a solemn little rite they had made up. She now reminds him of their vow, and asks if he still feels bound by it. He assures her that he does. However, he hesitates to do anything decisive in the immediate situ-

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ation. So far, as fiction, this is quite valid and admirably well written. But at the end the story just goes to hell. It disintegrates in a mystical moonlight foot race, which is either a hallucination or an act of divine intervention worthy of Madame Blavatsky, and I just can't make myself care which it is. The second story, "Edo and Enam," is a mystico-philological fantasy that is all pretty much on a level with the end of "Betrothed." I don't understand it. I don't even want to understand it, any more than I want to understand *Isis Unveiled.* This book is a minor work by a great writer. His humane personality shines through most of "Betrothed," but the book as a whole represents him poorly.

Robert Musil also is poorly represented, by *Five Women.* Only one of these stories, "Tonka," is worthy of him. Three of the other stories are quite ordinary, and one, "The Lady from Portugal," isn't much better than the trash Maurice Hewlett used to write; but "Tonka" is perfect. The situation it portrays is rather roughly similar to that portrayed in Maugham's *Of Human Bondage;* to compare them is to see clearly the difference between a short masterpiece and a long *poncif.*

The stories in Peter S. Feibleman's *Strangers and Graves* are warm with compassion and full of life; and their prose, though not brilliant, is quite sound. The hero of the second story, a New Orleans adolescent stutterer who sometimes takes his misery to a cemetery, just to sit quietly, sits in the kitchen one rainy afternoon and tells the cook, Thelma, that no one understands him and that New Orleans, the South, everybody, is doomed.

> "The big trouble with you," Thelma said, "is too many women understand you." She got up and went to the pot. "Strangers and that cemetery," she said, "is all you ever did care about. Only doom you got on you is you will never love anything in your whole life but strangers and graves."

I quote this passage in order to counteract the unfortunate title, which may tend to discourage readers. The book deserves many.

Joanne Greenberg is a charming writer, who writes about our current social problems without being doctrinaire or propagandistic or stuffy. Not many writers can do that. It is so difficult, in fact, that most of our best writers don't try. They leave life to the hacks. Mrs. Greenberg's *Summering* is therefore a very welcome indication that the experiences and personalities of freedom workers in the South and social workers in the North can be the matter of excellent fiction while the problems are still with us. "Lullabies" is the story of a well-brought-up Chicago girl who at the university falls in love with a graduate student of clinical psychology and becomes engaged to him. When she had been a little girl her grandfather had taken her for a walk every Sunday, to places such as the Planetarium, the Art Institute, pleasant parks, good restaurants, etc. Her fiancé now takes her

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for walks through the slums where he was born and where he intends to live after he gets his Master's degree so that he can help the people who live there. She is quite willing to share his life there, but her parents don't like the idea at all, and her grandfather is outraged. She tells them they don't know what the neighborhood is really like because they haven't actually seen it. Then her grandfather, shaking with fury, tells her he was born there.

"Gloss on a Decision of the Council of Nicaea" is the story of a Southern librarian who impulsively joins a Negro demonstration for equal rights and is now in jail, sharing with seven others a cell intended for two. In college she had specialized in medieval history; imprisonment had always meant, for her, "Boethius' great hour, Gottschalk, the Albigensian teachers, and John of the Cross." She has an idea that she will fortify her cell mates with great statements by famous prisoners; but she soon realizes that what they really need is something she can't give them but another prisoner can and does: practical, physical instruction in how to withstand the beatings the police will inflict on them. The police take out one each day, and throw her back in bleeding and vomiting. The leader of the cell is not the librarian but the experienced prisoner; and the general knowledge that the librarian, being white, will not be beaten up, further estranges them from her. The story of how she handles this situation is of the highest relevance for all of us, regardless of whether we ever have been or ever will be political prisoners. Such stories are epiphanies.

John Updike's more polished, more artful, more professional epiphanies make perhaps the best short stories of our time. Such stories as "A Madman" and "Harv is Plowing," as well as the title story, "The Music School," show an artistry and a compass of vision that I think will one day make him a major writer. He develops slowly, making slow headway against what we may call Lamb's Disease or the Blue China Syndrome: a self-conscious over-responsiveness to the charm of snow-topped branches or the round faces of children or the linked arms of strolling lovers or the merry thumping of the brass band—a slightly strained gaiety of the kind that mars the work of Katherine Mansfield and sometimes of Virginia Woolf and makes such essayists as A. A. Milne and Christopher Morley unreadable after we have passed our first youth. Logan Pearsall Smith endures by I don't know what magic, and Vladimir Nabokov by all-encompassing geniality—or, as we now miscall it, genius. But Updike's genial forces often droop under the bright load of those shiny things *The New Yorker* loves. Let us hope that he will either jettison them or develop the strength to carry them, as Nabokov does, lightly.

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Pottle's Boswell

IT SO HAPPENED THAT WHILE I WAS READING this first volume of Professor Pottle's biography of James Boswell,[1] I was also reading another biography of a writer, George Painter's life of Marcel Proust. And it struck me suddenly how little difference it seemed to be making that one of them wrote journals and letters and biographies, while the other wrote fiction. Both, I thought, were really aiming at the same objective, that of preserving and recreating on another plane of reality the world, life and people they had known. For both, this was the centre of their lives, the one thing about which they were consistently "serious," the one thing that redeemed lives which often appeared to others (and sometimes to themselves) dissipated or trivial or unsuccessful. And it even seemed doubtful, as I read Painter's exposition of the ways in which Proust's characters were built up from the people he had known, if the "fictional" creations of the novelist were much more remote from the originals, much more changed by the processes of manipulation and selection, than the "real" characters of the biographer and autobiographer.

That Boswell was primarily a *writer* is the central principle of Professor Pottle's biography. And I am sure it is the right principle. But a real critical analysis of this writer, of his writings as literature, has yet to be made, as Pottle remarks, for we have all been too fascinated—or, some of us, too repelled—by Boswell as a character, or a gossip, or a psychological case. In some of the more austere centres of literary study, it is not well thought of to be fascinated by Boswell; this, it is felt, is mere gossip-interest, and prurient gossip-interest at that. To which charge I would have to plead guilty in part; but the interest might be justified if one could demonstrate that this man was also a great creative writer, and that the impossibility of avoiding gossip-interest is due not to his having been a lesser or more inarticulate writer but to the fact that the material of his writing was the same, undisguised, as that of his life. But how to avoid the critical tangle in which this fact involves us? How to keep our analysis of the writings at least partially and temporarily distinct from our involvement with their author? I suggest a subterfuge. Let us try to look at Boswell's work as if we didn't know the truth about it—as if we believed that Samuel Johnson, Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Wilkes, Lord Auchinleck, Giuseppe Paoli, and James Boswell himself—not to mention a host of minor personalities, such as John Reid the sheepstealer, the Rev. William Temple, shocked and disapproving confidant, Mrs. Louisa Lewis, Peggy Doig, and a great gaggle of other disreputable females

[1] JAMES BOSWELL, THE EARLIER YEARS, by *Frederick A. Pottle*. McGraw-Hill, $12.50.

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—had never been real people at all, but were all characters in a vast picaresque novel of more than Proustian length and more than Balzacian crowdedness. Its title we might model on Sterne; it is called *The Life and Opinions of James Boswell, Gentleman.* Professor Pottle points out, quite justly, that this trick is really a fraud; Boswell sticks closely to fact and invents nothing, and this makes of his work a thing inherently different from that of the novelist. It is a fraud, then; but it may be a useful fraud.

For by this device it may be possible more easily to tease out the main strands, by applying the sort of structural analysis we would apply to a work of fiction. This "work of fiction" is one of those written in the first person; therefore, the first thing we must do is to decide on the character of the Narrator, as created and presented by the "novelist." Professor Pottle gives us a start. He observes that Boswell was 1) a Scot; 2) a Scot "of family, not a plebeian"; 3) a lawyer, and one who had "a special genius for criminal practice." To which I would add: 4) a man whose indoctrinated Calvinism was always in conflict with his passions for worldly pleasure and for the sensuous appeal of Catholic ritual; 5) a man highly sexed who was nevertheless incapable of a stable and satisfactory relationship, perhaps of really loving and respecting any woman; 6) a man whose own mind was rather quick and inquisitive than profound or original but who had a real passion for intellectual discussion and reverence for those whom he regarded as its masters; and 7) a man whose Scottish patriotism, however genuine, was always in collision with his conviction that ultimately Scotland was a province and its true capital was London.

These, then, are the main strands of the Narrator's character in the "novel" of *James Boswell,* and the way in which they are interwoven will make the quality of the work. He is clearly a highly "unreliable narrator" (in Wayne Booth's phrase); his own character is so strongly marked yet also so complex and changeable that one must never assume *his* version of an incident to be the whole truth of it or to be the version which another character involved would have accepted. The "novelist" who has created this Narrator never commits the crime which Henry James called "going behind"—the crime of explaining something to the reader which can be explained only by departing from the adopted viewpoint. Take the episode in the *London Journal* in which Louisa, having been turned off by the Narrator because, as he thinks, she has infected him with the pox, returns without comment some money he had lent her:

> This forenoon a maid from Louisa left a packet for me. It was most carefully sealed up, "by the hands of attention," but was not addressed to me. I opened it up and found my two guineas returned, without a single word written. I felt a strange kind of mixed confusion. My tender heart relented. I thought I had acted too harshly to her. I imagined she might—perhaps—have been ignorant of her

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> situation. I was so foolish as to think of returning the money and writing her a letter of atonement. I have too much of what Shakespeare calls "the milk of human kindness." I mentioned the thing to Dempster. He said it was just a piece of deep artifice in her. I resolved to think no more on the matter, and was glad that I had come off two guineas better than I expected.

Gossip-interest longs to know what Louisa's motives were. Genuine pride, hurt affection, and sense of injured innocence? (She protested that she could not have infected him, and Professor Pottle adduces some medical evidence which suggests she may have been right.) Or a desire to score a little moral victory? Or perhaps a faint hope that this might win him back—as the cynical Dempster thought? But the Narrator does not know, and never knows, and therefore the "novelist" does not let us know. Louisa, with this last gesture, disappears from the book as she did from the Narrator's life. Thus the ignorance of Boswell, the real person, combined with the scrupulousness of Boswell the autobiographer, produces an effect analogous to that produced by the integrity of a novelist, and in many episodes leaves one with that teasing ambiguity which is an integral part of the effect deliberately produced by many real novelists.

And then there is the question of style, of the medium through which the Narrator is presented. In a first-person novel, this is the basic quality, without which the attempt is scarcely begun; for unless one is immediately convinced (and never thereafter disillusioned) that this is Huck talking, or Jake Barnes, or Jane Eyre, the novel does not really exist. The Boswellian style is a very remarkable creation. Professor Pottle finds an admirable word for it—"low-pitched"—and he points out that it is this quality—a freedom from the pomp and formality we expect in eighteenth-century prose—which largely accounts for Boswell's appeal to the twentieth century. This is true; but Boswell's style has many keys, of which the "low-pitched" is only one, and the skill with which the "novelist" presents the Narrator is largely a matter of modulating from one key into another. When the Narrator is presenting himself in the guise of a reverential and objective biographer of a great man, the "novelist" can give him a style of appropriately impersonal formality:

> To write the Life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equalled by few in any age, is an arduous, and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task.

At the other extreme from this is a narrative manner of extraordinary nearness to the event itself, a style of photographic rapidity, of complete frankness and abnegation of dignity:

> Grievous was it to the flesh till seven in the morning, when my blood

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> took a fine flow. I was quite drunk with brisk spirits, and about eight, in came a woman with a basket of chocolate to sell. I toyed with her and found she was with child. Oho! a safe piece. Into my closet. 'Habs er ein Man?' 'Ja, in den Guards bei Potsdam.' To bed directly. In a minute—over. I rose cool and astonished, half angry, half laughing. I sent her off. Bless me, have I now committed adultery?

A great deal of the comedy of the "novel" entitled *James Boswell* resides in such hilarious contrasts between full dress and no dress; but the comedy would be too obvious, too lacking in subtlety, if there were nothing in between. There is in fact a great deal more.

Immediately behind this photographic notation of the event—sometimes mixed in with it—is the self-analysis of a tormented introvert, a Rousseau-like self-confessor and self-justifier. The passage just quoted continues like this:

> Should I now torment myself with speculations on sin, and on losing in one morning the merits of a year's chastity? . . . I am sorry that this accident has happened, I know not how. Let it go. I'll think no more of it. Divine Being! Pardon the errors of a weak mortal. Give me more steadiness. Let me grow more perfect.

Professor Pottle suggests that in this extraordinarily intimate and close-to-the-happening style, our "novelist" had been influenced by the manner of Richardson in *Clarissa;* and certainly there is a very close resemblance, for Richardson was perhaps the first writer to aim at a simultaneous notation of external event and internal monologue about it.

Moreover, this "novelist" has something which Richardson did not have: a remarkable talent as reporter. No other writer gives you so vividly the feel of the eighteenth-century scene, as Boswell does in this sketch (in the *London Journal*) of the condemned highwayman in Newgate:

> Paul, who had been in the sea-service and was called Captain, was a genteel, spirited young fellow. He was just a Macheath. He was dressed in a white coat and blue silk vest and silver, with his hair neatly queued and a silver-laced hat, smartly cocked. An acquaintance asked him how he was. He said, "Very well"; quite resigned. Poor fellow! I really took a great concern for him, and wished to relieve him. He walked firmly and with a good air, with his chains rattling upon him, to the chapel.

But this is not *only* reporting. This "novelist" never makes the mistake of including in his fictional creation undigested slabs of journalism. What he reports is faithfully seen and felt as the Narrator would see and feel it: in this case, it reflects the Narrator's morbid interest in violent crime and capital punishment. (He goes next day to see the

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highwayman hanged, and is "thrown into a very deep melancholy.") The "novelist," again, is a propagandist of considerable powers. He was quite capable, as Professor Pottle remarks, of "the kind of journalism—brilliant, protean, and unscrupulous—which the economics of publishing would not make possible till a century after his death," and he showed his talent on behalf of General Paoli and the Corsicans and of the Douglas side in that *cause célèbre* which involved paternity and inheritance in two great Scottish families. But these causes, too, were in character: they were adopted by the Narrator because they satisfied some deep needs of his nature. The cause of the Corsicans appealed to his romantic hero-worship and his day-dream of himself as warrior-chieftain; the Douglas cause touched on his feudal pride and his passionate devotion to the concept of Family.

Thus, the parts of *James Boswell* which describe the Narrator's involvement in these causes, though they may be called digressions, are not irrelevant digressions: and the same can be said of that longer and more famous digression which has for subtitle "The Life of Samuel Johnson, Ll.D." Of the opening of that part some short-sighted critics have complained that for too long (more than 200 pages, in fact) the Narrator does not appear; they do not see how the very duration of his non-appearance sharpens one's expectation of the moment when, with ironic pomp and precision, his re-appearance is announced: "At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop . . ."—and from that moment on there is no doubt who is at the real centre of the book. Not Samuel Johnson, but James Boswell: Samuel Johnson is there only as James Boswell sees and responds to him.

The truth is that the author of *James Boswell* had a most remarkable battery of literary talents. One more may be mentioned. A major difficulty of the first-person novel (which caused Henry James to reject it with scorn and distaste) is the danger of monotony of viewpoint: the very integrity which must keep it true may also make it narrow, and if the Narrator be (as Narrators are likely to be) introspective and self-centered, this difficulty is increased. There is the danger of becoming exasperated with the egotism of the novel's viewpoint, as one would be with the egotism of such a person in real life. But the Narrator of *James Boswell* is no Hamlet. In spite of his recurrent hypochondria, he never, for long, finds life "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable"; he could never say that "man delights not him; no, nor woman neither." His egotism is always modified by a great gift of empathy: a gift which he himself recognised and described. "I can tune myself so to the tone of any bearable man I am with that he is as much at freedom as with another self, and, till I am gone, cannot imagine me a stranger." This social gift, transferred to writing, is the gift which creates those vivid sketches of people that come and go all through *James Boswell* and contribute enormously to its liveliness and power.

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Perhaps it is time to drop this fantasy. The point, I hope, has been made: the point that at some time in the eighteenth century modern novel and modern autobiography were born, that they were born as twins, and that the courses of their lives, from that day to this, have never completely diverged. And James Boswell was there at the birth. Professor Pottle's life of him, which will certainly be the definitive one (for why should there be a third, after Boswell and Pottle?), has made an excellent start with this first volume; and it has done so very largely because he has kept steadily to his announced resolution of presenting his subject above all as an author. The unbelievably massive apparatus of scholarship which, at Yale, they are bringing to bear on Boswell is justifiable only on this principle: that we have here to deal with a major genius in the art of writing. The first volume of the Yale Research Edition of Boswell's correspondence has also made its appearance;[2] this is the volume which contains his correspondence with one of his many epistolary confidants, John Johnston of Grange (to whom, in regular packets, the *London Journal* was originally sent). This volume can hardly claim to be one of the most fascinating in Boswell's *oeuvre*. Many of the letters are comparatively dull and trivial, and over considerable stretches the Journal, going on contemporaneously, has drained off the best stuff. (Boswell, on the whole, was a better journal-writer than letter-writer.) But we must have it, as we must have, eventually, everything he ever wrote that time has preserved. And the standard of editing and production which this volume sets for the Research Edition is formidable. I am perhaps better able than most reviewers to judge the weight and accuracy of learning which Professor Walker's notes and commentary display, since a major part of them is concerned with the minutiae of life in Scotland and Edinburgh, my native land and town: and as far as I can see, he never gets a comma wrong. The mosaic of information he provides does contribute something to our understanding of Boswell: it shows how enmeshed he was in the intricate network of alliances and intermarriages which made up (and still makes up) the Scottish gentry; it lets one understand what he had to break away from when he felt the pull of London. And because some of the letters in this volume are not *by* Boswell, but about him, it tells us something of what others thought of him. The *London Journal* reveals that when in London Boswell was embarrassed and annoyed by having to keep company with certain fellow-Scots—"to see just the plain *hamely* Fife family hurt my grand ideas of London . . ."—and now, from a letter by a member of that family, Andrew Erskine, we can see how *they* took it. "I remember well when I follow'd him up to London, instead of receiving me with that warmth, with that cordiality which I expected, he looked upon me with a degree of horror." The "novelist" of *James Boswell*, faithful as ever to his Narrator's ignorance, could not have told us that.

[2] THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JAMES BOSWELL AND JOHN JOHNSTON OF GRANGE, edited by *Ralph S. Walker*. McGraw-Hill. $17.50.

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

In Spite Of Artifice

IN ONE SENSE THE MOST IMPORTANT of the new books of poetry I have chosen to write about this quarter[1] is Theodore Roethke's *Collected Poems,* although it offers us, actually, little that is new: only a few pages of previously uncollected poems at the back, some of which were previously uncollected, I'm sure, because Roethke wished them to be. At that, this appendix does not include a few poems which have been published in magazines during recent years and which seem quite good enough to go into the poet's collected edition; no doubt someday the whole job will need to be done again. But meanwhile this is the volume that will be on every poetry-reader's shelf, an extraordinary volume by an extraordinary, pathetic, mad, miraculous poet. I enjoyed rereading the early poems, so sweetly humorous and grave. I suppose "My Papa's Waltz" is the most famous of them.

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

1 COLLECTED POEMS, by *Theodore Roethke.* Doubleday. $5.95. SELECTED POEMS: NEW & OLD, 1923-1966, by *Robert Penn Warren.* Random House. $7.95. MANUAL OF PIETY, by *Bertolt Brecht.* Trans. by *Eric Bentley.* Grove. $10.00. NECESSITIES OF LIFE, by *Adrienne Rich.* Norton. $4.50. THE RESCUED YEAR, by *William Stafford.* Harper. $3.95. THE DUMBFOUNDING, by *Margaret Avison.* Norton. $4.50. THE WRONG ANGEL, by *Stanley Moss.* Macmillan. $4.95. LIVE OR DIE, by *Anne Sexton.* Houghton Mifflin. $4.00 CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND OTHER POEMS, by *Kathleen Fraser.* Kayak (2808 Laguna Street, San Francisco). $1.50. VIRGIL'S MACHINES, by *Joel Sloman.* Norton. $4.50. THE STRIDE OF TIME, by *Richmond Lattimore.* University of Michigan Press. $4.00.

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Such waltzing indeed is not easy, in spite of appearances, and if the young boy hung on "like death," so did the later man—with good reason. Roethke wrote more and more about his father as he moved into his tortured and tortuous middle poems—"Fear was my father, Father Fear"—and what could he do but hang on like death? He did, pursuing his images of death into ever farther darknesses and asserting over and over again his reconciliation. It was hard, insane work. And so we are grateful to have this early poem, with its clarity, its generous, affectionate detail, and we realize how important these qualities are throughout his work; his love of detail, generosity, affection, his insistent and absorbing curiosity; for these are what kept him sane and sweet to the end in spite of everything. Perhaps it isn't too much to say that these qualities are what make his poetry something we can bear to read at all.

But it is hard reading, even so, as one moves into the mature poems. Like hammer-strokes the statements fall: pain, anguish, folly. He forced himself through, blocking out the words like shields. There are statements I am sure no one understands, certainly not I, absolute conundrums jammed together; and the rhetoric, too, becomes a stumbling-block, page after page of these catechistic, almost Talmudic formulas.

> Mother me out of here. What more will the bones allow?
> Will the sea give the wind suck? A toad folds into a stone.
> These flowers are all fangs. Comfort me, fury.
> Wake me, witch, we'll do the dance of rotten sticks.

As Roethke comments: "What a whelm of proverbs, Mr. Pinch!"—and who can say he has drained them? They grow like plants, in furrows; Roethke's is, as he would have boasted, a vegetable poetry. Yet they are not too much, I am sure of that. And as for the meanings, the feelings, the more I read the more I see how nearly they consolidate around certain repeated images, and how in the end they reach back toward the conventions. The idea of the edge, for instance: very important to Roethke.

> This is only the edge of whiteness . . .
> The edge cannot eat the center . . .
> The edge is what I have . . .

And the idea of the cave, the river, the roots of things, fish, birds, women, the eye, the dance. It is a richness. And as we live with these poems we will become accustomed to the many centers of insight that fix the tide of the poet's fever, and we shall be quite comforable with them.

What was the fever? Our own. The clown in search of the saint. The

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death-haunted in search of consolation. Roethke spoke often of the journey to God as the longest of all: "From me to Thee's a long and terrible way." But it wasn't only that the journey was long, it wasn't only that it could, for him, have no end; Roethke's anguish lay in the knowledge that he hadn't the faintest notion where the path led, or whether to go forward or back. "What grace I have is enough," he asserted, but it never was, and he went on asserting it, cheerfully, crookedly, in mock hope and mock despair, to the very end. Always the need for a further affirmation, which immediately provoked, not a doubt, but a contrary affirmation.

What does what it should do needs nothing more.

But:

Being, not doing, is my first joy.

And so he stumbled on, in contradiction and desire, toward the mouth of the terrible dark cave or toward the bright sea, whichever his mood promised, and his hopes and fears fleeted across his words like winds across water; always the assertion, always the further assertion, until the repetition itself became the sign of its own failure, unadmitted yet there, eternally there. This was a great poem he made, unwritten, encompassing all his other poems: perhaps the most complete expression of pathos in our literature; we are tempted to call it his best poem.

But no. We are recalled to the man within the pathos: his joy, love, generosity, allegiance to detail. His love of flowers and birds, his knowledge of them. He was the modern American *par excellence,* as devoted to the land and its creatures as a pioneer, yet without the sense of the land's cruelty; he was the gardener, the birdwatcher. Toward the end of his life he wrote a poem called "All Morning," an improvisation that led to an unexpected paean.

Here in our aging district the wood pigeon lives with us,
His deep-throated cooing part of the early morning,
Far away, close-at-hand, his call floating over the on-coming traffic,
The lugubriously beautiful plaint uttered at regular intervals,
A protest from the past, a reminder.

They sit, three or four, high in the fir-trees back of the house,
Flapping away heavily when a car blasts too close,
And one drops down to the garden, the high rhododendron,
Only to fly over to his favorite perch, the cross-bar of a telephone pole;
Grave, hieratic, a piece of Assyrian sculpture,
A thing carved of stone or wood, with the dull iridescence of long-polished wood,

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Looking at you without turning his small head,
With a round vireo's eye, quiet and contained,
Part of the landscape.

And the Steller jay, raucous, sooty-headed, lives with us,
Conducting his long wars with the neighborhood cats,
All during mating season,
Making a racket to wake the dead,
To distract attention from the short-tailed ridiculous young ones
Hiding deep in the blackberry bushes—
What a scuttling and rapping along the drainpipes,
A fury of jays, diving and squawking,
When our spayed female cat yawns and stretches out in the sunshine—
And the wrens scold, and the chickadees frisk and frolic,
Pitching lightly over the high hedgerows, dee-deeing,
And the ducks near Lake Washington waddle down the highway after a rain,
Stopping traffic, indignant as addled old ladies,
Pecking at crusts and peanuts, their green necks glittering;
And the hummingbird dips in and around the quince tree,
Veering close to my head,
Then whirring off sideways to the top of the hawthorn,
Its almost-invisible wings buzzing, hitting the loose leaves intermittently—

A delirium of birds!
Peripheral dippers come to rest on the short grass,
Their heads jod-jodding like pigeons;
The gulls, the gulls far from their waves
Rising, wheeling away with harsh cries,
Coming down on a patch of lawn:

It is neither spring nor summer: it is Always,
With towhees, finches, chickadees, California quail, wood doves,
With wrens, sparrows, juncos, cedar waxwings, flickers,
With Baltimore orioles, Michigan bobolinks,
And those birds forever dead,
The passenger pigeon, the great auk, the Carolina paraquet,
All birds remembered, O never forgotten!
All in my yard, of a perpetual Sunday,
All morning! All morning!

If anything defeats Roethke in the long or not-so-long run, it will be simply that our civilization is moving so rapidly toward the condition in which this aspect of his love will be incomprehensible.

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Robert Penn Warren's *Selected Poems* contains 100 pages of new work and 200 pages of old, and hence is bigger than Roethke's *Collected;* a more attractive book too, more capably designed and printed, though on the other hand it costs two dollars extra. It offers what Warren considers his important work as a poet, excepting the long dramatic poem called *Brother to Dragons.* Warren has revised many of the older poems, "some of them," he says, "drastically." But in checking back to a few earlier versions I found only the minor revisions, clarifications of grammar and syntax that strengthen the poems without altering their total effect. Altogether the book will serve Warren well, I should think, and perhaps it is a misfortune—a small one—that Roethke did not, for whatever reason, perform the same service for himself before he died.

Warren, like Roethke, gives us a prosodic hurdle. Here is part of a poem from a recent sequence called "Fall Comes in Back-Country Vermont":

> Deader they die here, or at least
> Differently, deeper the hole, and after
> The burying, at night, late, you
> Are more apt to wonder about the drainage
>
> Of the cemetery, but know that you needn't, for
> Here's all hills anyway, or mountain, and the hole
> Standard, but if no drainage problem, yet
> You may still wake with a kind of psychic
>
> Twitch, as when the nerves in the amputee's
> Stump (a saw did it, no doubt) twitch and wonder
> How that which has gone off and set up
> As a separate self is making out, and whether
>
> It repents of its rashness, and would like
> To come back and crawl into bed and be
> Forgiven, and even though you, like me,
> May forget the name of the dead, in the dark you
>
> Can't help but remember that if there are only
> Sixteen voters and one dies, that leaves only . . .

But it is impossible to find a place to stop. Not because the poem is a tour-de-force, as indeed it is, 116 lines in one sentence, but because so many lines end on that suspended up-beat, running over, plunging over to the next line, and so on and on in that anapestic rhythm, which in itself is a singular development for a mature poet; usually anapests are the experiments of beginners. The effect on page after

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page—for this is the style of many poems, not merely of the one I have quoted—is not so much speed as maundering, like Gavin Douglas. Is it something necessarily southern? For all that he has lived in the north a long time now and his scene is more likely to be New England than Kentucky, Warren is deep in one southern tradition, the prose tradition; he is closer to Faulkner than to his fellow Fugitives, Ransom and Tate; and extreme talkiness, for reasons somewhat obscure, is an important technical aspect of that tradition. The one-sentence poem is the climax, though probably not the pinnacle, of Warren's poetic achievement.

Talkiness and horror, they go together, at least in that rather odd tradition. Warren's topic is the horror of death, the plain grisliness, without any of Roethke's mitigating wonder or soft sorrow. Warren's is the simpler view, without an evolving complexity from poem to poem; it is the same melodrama repeated again and again, Websterian or even Euripidean if you like, but melodrama nevertheless; and hence we yawn over many pages, or amuse ourselves by picking out the triteness: "In a room, somewhere, a telephone keeps ringing." I doubt that this big selection of Warren's poetry will become an important part of many libraries. The question is: are there individual poems that succeed? There are. At almost regular intervals throughout these pages I found poems that come alive with a real shock, making all my psychosomatic symptoms twitch at once, like a school of minnows. The old metaphysical gasp still can shake us. A few of Warren's best poems are from his early period, the poems in strict form such as "Bearded Oaks," but I think his best are found in the work done since about 1950: "Court-Martial," "Bear Track Plantation," the fine "Ballad of a Sweet Dream of Peace," and a few others. These will be with us a long time because they are quite simply unforgettable; in anthologies, or in smaller selections of Warren's work.

The new book in the Grove Press edition of the Works of Bertolt Brecht is a bi-lingual volume, with translations by Eric Bentley, of the *Manual of Piety,* which was first published as *Taschenpostille* in 1926 and was later published in various German editions with altered titles and contents. It was Brecht's first book of poems. It is, of course, anything but a manual of piety. All the poems were written while Brecht was very young, before he became a committed Marxist, and they are rebellious, exuberant exercises in shock, parodying the religious and moral attitudes of the then Establishment, full of undergraduate touches. Yet just this half-impish quality, we recall, was what Brecht developed into his characteristic later style. Some of these early poems are strong; witty; adept at turning back on themselves; written in the dry, ironic diction that had a considerable influence on Anglo-American poetry of the Thirties. Here is the first stanza of one of the most famous of them, the "Ballade von der Hanna Cash":

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Mit dem Rock von Kattun und dem gelben Tuch
Und den Augen der schwarzen Seen
Ohne Geld und Talent und doch mit genug
Vom Schwarzhaar, das sie offen trug
Bis zu den schwärzeren Zeh'n:
Das war die Hanna Cash, mein Kind
Die die "Gentlemen" eingeseift
Die kam mit dem Wind und ging mit dem Wind
Der in die Savannen läuft.

And here is Bentley's translation:

With her plain print dress and her yellow shawl
And eyes like lakes as black as jet
No money and no talent and yet quite a lot
Of black hair which she wore hanging down
To her toes which were blacker yet.
And that was Hannah Cash, my child,
Who gypped her gentlemen so.
With the wind that blew across the savannas
She did come and go

I cannot see how such a translation, which is a fair sample of the whole, can be anything but a grave disservice to Brecht's writing, although I suppose a small number of readers will be glad to have the German text available in an American edition.

The hardness of Brecht's poetry is what we like in our century, wherever we find it. We don't know what to call it exactly. Sometimes we resort, idiotically, to speaking of *real* poetry, and of such nebulous criteria as genuineness and urgency. We despise artifice. We dislike even the magnificent poems of the Pléiade, and we resent it when critics like Northrop Frye tell us that the great poets of the English Renaissance worked conventionally, both in substance and in style. Much of our own bickering is an attempt to pin the label of artifice on one or another group of poets. And I must say all this seems to me the most banal folly. For even granting that the poetry of artifice is somehow "wrong," which would be hard to support historically, isn't it plain that any structure of language tends toward artifice, and that most of them reach it, whatever their form or style? On the other hand, a "real poet" can take whatever style prevails in his vicinity and use it to make "real poetry," as we have seen time and again. And so a poet like Adrienne Rich, whose new book is called *Necessities of Life*, stands immune from the bickering, for her work is clearly driven back deep into the preconditions of language, away from artifice; driven by the cause-seeking imperatives of the flesh. She writes: "Piece by piece I seem to re-enter the world," as her poems do also; each fragment wrought out by force from the muteness of experience.

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The mind's passion is all for singling out.
Obscurity has another tale to tell.

And she is not afraid of obscurity, the objective obscurity that consists in the wholeness of things, caught paradoxically in a fragment of words, and ending if one is lucky in a truly poetic statement.

Your flag is dried-blood, turkey-comb
flayed stiff in the wind,
half-mast on the day of victory,

anarchist prince of evening marshes!
Your eye blurs in a wet smoke,
the stubble freezes under your heel,

the cornsilk *Mädchen* all hags now,
their gold teeth drawn,
the milkweeds glutted and rifled,

but not by you, foundering hero!
The future reconnoiters in dirty boots
along the cranberry-dark horizon.

Stars swim like grease-flecks
in that sky, night pulls a long knife.
Your empire drops to its knees in the dark.

Thus moving from summer to autumm, a part of a longer poem. No extra word is here; everything inessential is pared away in the abrasive contact of poet and feeling; the syntax moves in unchangeable measures. Piece by piece the poem moves toward success.

But tight language is not enough, and detail can be laid on. From William Stafford's new book, *The Rescued Year,* this is a poem called "Our People":

Under the killdeer cry
our people hunted all day
graying toward winter, their lodges
thin to the north wind's edge.

Watching miles of marsh grass
take the supreme caress,
they looked out over the earth,
and the north wind felt like the truth.

Fluttering in that wind
they stood there on the world,
clenched in their own lived story
under the killdeer cry.

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This is pretentious poetry, trying to say more than it does. What people? Yours and mine presumably, but what about them? We are given no reason to care; the coming of this winter is unfelt. We can take this poem in two ways: either as artifice, a conventional song, in which case it fails because such locutions as "supreme caress," "*on* the world," and "lived story" are puffed-up and empty, while the rhymes do nothing at all; or as an emblematic structure, and this seems more likely, resembling the small poems of Edwin Muir, in which case it fails because the emblematic associations are attenuated beyond the reach of feeling. It is as if the poet, trying to make a poem about death and the coming of winter which will not sound like hundreds of other poems on the same theme, decides that his best course is to say less and less about death and the coming of winter. But this does not yield poetry, it yields a tricky exterior with no force inside, the height of artifice—a kind of double-crostic. Stafford works backward from his subject, not forward to it. He has written better poems than this, and a few like "The Farm on the Great Plains" and "Across the Lake's Eye" from his new collection, that almost make his method work. Even in these, however, the same failings weaken the total effect.

Margaret Avison writes poems containing lines like these:

> Barometer falling.
> Stars falling, but in that
> blue sky who marks it, they fall all over out there.

These statements are not connected up with anything particularly, but accumulate down the page, rather like Cummings at his most garrulous, his worst. It is smart, I suppose, the newest kind of magazine verse; but surely artifice. If it were not that her book, *The Dumfounding,* contains buried in its center a small section of religious poems that rise above this smartness, though they do not leave it altogether behind, the book would not be worth writing about. As it is, these poems have a certain verbose, crackling sincerity, like wet wood burning, which perhaps we should take as the index of what she may yet accomplish.

Stanley Moss has been known to us for some time, but his first book, *The Wrong Angel,* which contains work done as early as 1949, comes to us only now. It is a small book of mostly small poems: travel sketches, suburban poems, literary poems; there is a sequence called "Poems on a Theme of Antony and Cleopatra." Most of these are overwritten and uninteresting. But the book also contains perhaps eight or ten hard, bitter poems that are extremely moving, poems like "Sailing from the United States," "And Now There Is No Place to Look," "Two Fishermen," and "God Poem." These are products of a lonely, distant, determined sensibility. I do not think *The Wrong Angel* is quite the first book that some people have called it; whatever it will do for its author on the cocktail circuit, it will not launch him at one swoop into the esteem of reasonably critical readers. Moreover

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there is a certain dilettantish quality about these poems, using the term in the way it might apply to Washington Allston or Dag Hammarskjöld, a quality appearing in their tone, in their slightness and infrequency, and in a kind of incidental spontaneity, that makes one wonder if their author's main impetus doesn't lie elsewhere, or if he isn't reviving the type of the nineteenth-century *amateur* who disdains the workshop but occasionally turns out something surpassing professional intensity, just to show he can. Is this unfair? Certainly those few hard, bitter poems hold in one's memory. Just possibly—and I think any reader will recognize the possibility—this book will appear in retrospect to have been the second most important book of the quarter.

The literary quality of Anne Sexton's new poems, in *Live or Die,* is impossible to judge, at least in the brief time given a reviewer; they raise the never-solved problem of what literature really is, where you draw the line between art and documentary. Certainly her book is one of the most moving I have read in a long time. It is the record of four years of emotional illness, the turns of fear and despair and suicidal depression, a heartbreaking account. The wonder is that she was able to write any poetry at all. What she has written is strong, clear, rather simple, never repressed and yet never out of hand. Some of the poems wander a little; they are unstructured, they start up, flag, then start again, or slip into references too private for us to understand. But I do not want to give the impression that they are jottings or notes, that they are merely documentary. They are poems. They are the work of a gifted, intelligent, woman almost in control of her material. Ultimately the question is, I suppose: how well can the imagination function in a condition of stress? I have the feeling that in the future—and the last poem in her book speaks confidently of the future—these poems will serve as "starters" for further work, giving the poet ideas, images, snatches of language that may be strengthened and consolidated in more fully objectified, imagined poems.

Two first books by young poets bring us experiments in surrealist writing that are very different from those we usually expect from young writers. They write without shock effects, without coyness. They write seriously, and are obviously part of the new effort in this country to understand and use the resources of surrealist technique. Kathleen Fraser's poems, in her *Change of Address,* are chiefly simple, straightforward "happenings" that decline occasionally into sentimentality or inconsequence, but never into whimsy. Joel Sloman—his book is called *Virgil's Machines*—is a more complex poet, his mind is witty and philosophically informed. His language is acute. Some of his poems end nowhere, it seems to me, and tend to disguise their embarrassment in verbal twiddling. But both poets have given us at least a few completely finished poems in all dimensions except the one we mean when we speak of the mature imagination. That comes with time, and no doubt it comes to a surrealist poet in a somewhat special way. Meanwhile we have two books of more than passing interest.

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Finally, because it surprised and pleased me I shall quote a poem from Richmond Lattimore's book, *The Stride of Time*. Most of Lattimore's poetry is conscious artifice: sestinas, other complex forms, a flashy diction, intricate rhymes—what we would expect from a writer whose primary bent is translation (and I should add that I have admired and relied on some of his translations for years). But this poem, "Witness to Death," moved me with its modesty, and gratified me with its right way, as opposed to the wrong I found in so much else I have read this quarter, of making literary allusions within a poem.

Disconsolate I
from the thinning line
have seen friends drop and die.
All I called mine
has gone or will go
from its place in the sun.
This we know,
and nothing can be done.

Villon, Nashe, Dunbar,
to your great testaments
I too assent from afar,
bestow my violence,
and throw my rhyme
and rage in the feeding face
of the great pig of time.
Beauty gone from her place

wit wasted and lost,
promise killed with blight,
McCarter and George Frost,
Dilys who was delight,
Gilly suddenly gone,
Cartwright killed in the air,
Forrester, Conklin undone
in their prime. Where, where

is the rose, and the great
heart, and the shine of wit?
I hate death. I hate
all who speak well of it.
Dunbar, Nashe, Villon,
we sang as best we could
for the sake of those who are gone,
and it does no good.

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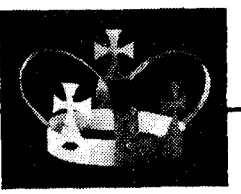

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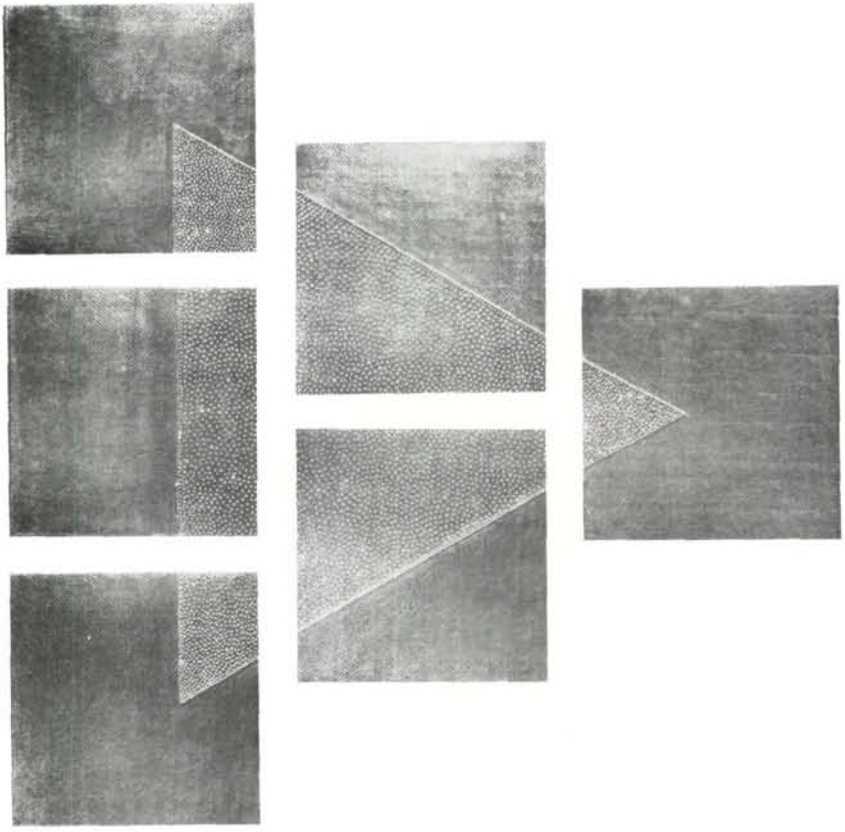

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Metalized cellulose acetate butyrate on wood with acrylic and crystals. Six panels each 21 × 21 × 3″
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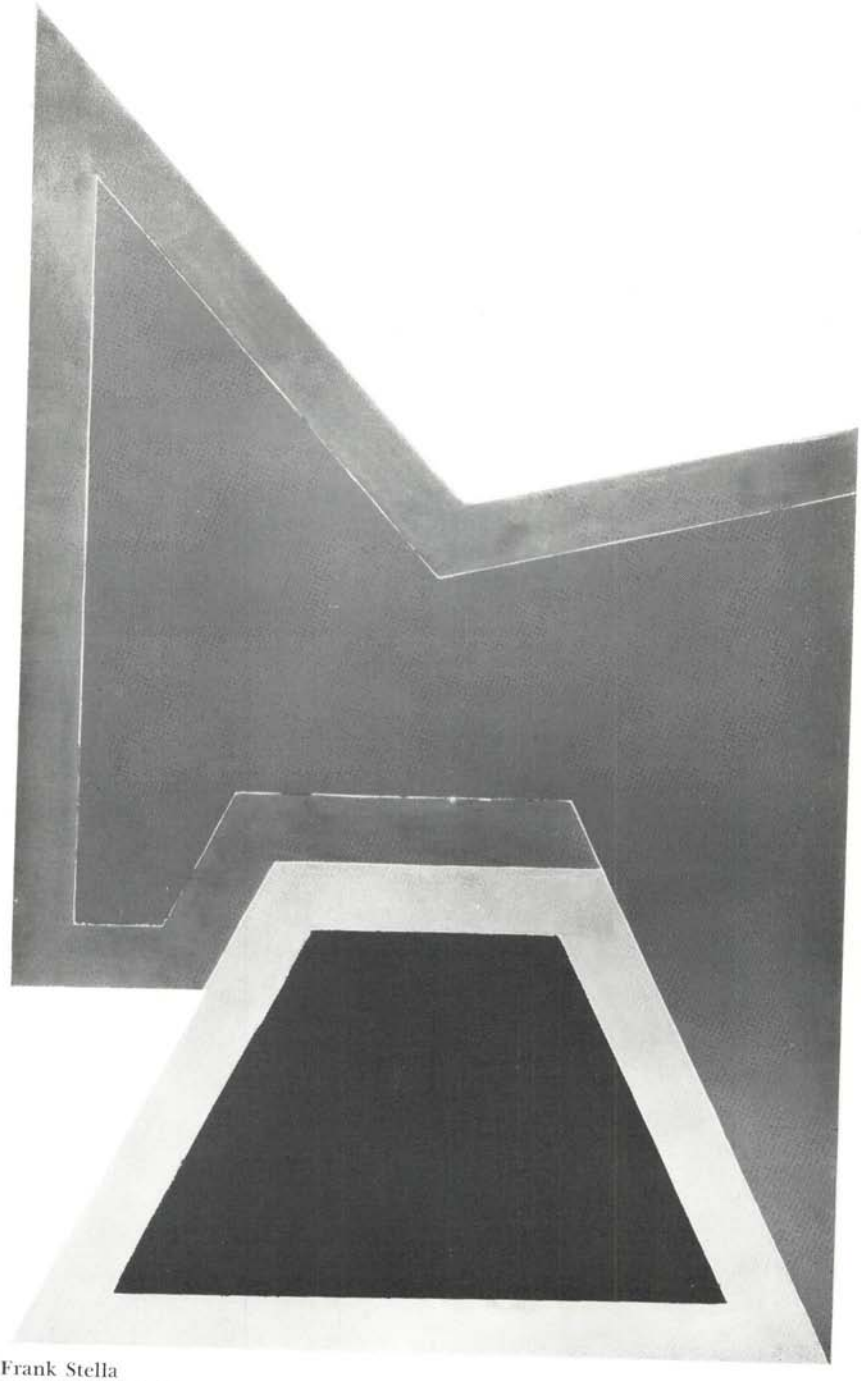

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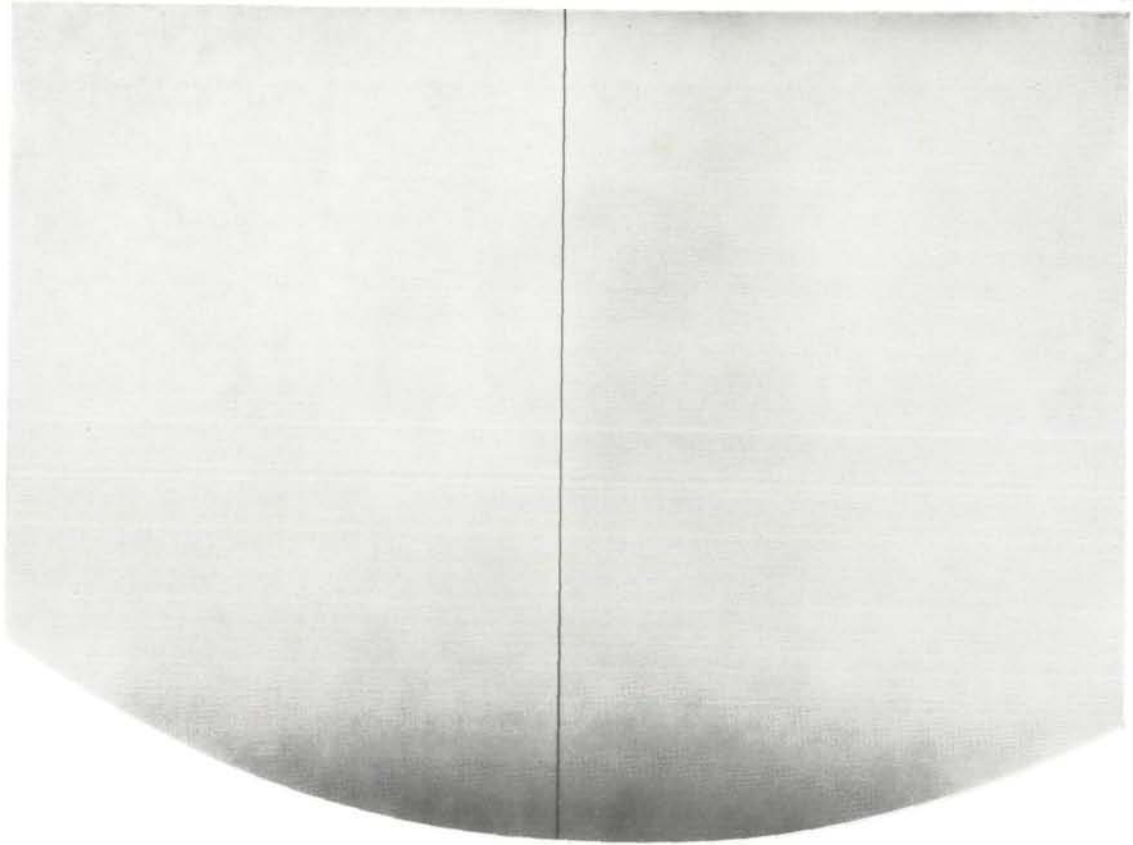

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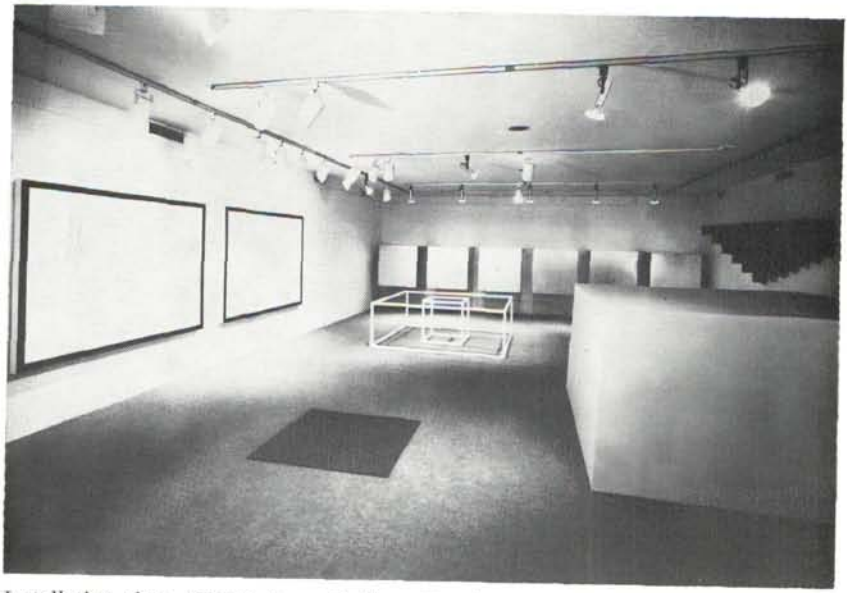

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